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NEWS 3

New Labour ditches old works



One of Peter Mandelson's choices, *Separate Worlds*, which according to artist Michael Salaman represents an inability to communicate

Politically sound? It must be art

Lucy Ward on artistic choices of ministers, from gloomy Mandelson to abstract Blair

FIRST it was wall-paper that caused trouble for New Labour's choice of the Lord Chancellor and his refurbished apartment. Now the spotlight is to fall on what else ministers hang on their walls, as the Government's choice of art is revealed to the nation.

Peter Mandelson, the Minister without Portfolio, has adorned his rooms in the Cabinet Office with a painting said by its artist to depict 'loneliness, frustration and a desire for the unobtainable'. It is widely known that Mr Mandelson is in search of a 'proper job' and a cabinet seat.

More particularly, according to artist Michael Salaman, Mr Mandelson's choice of a gloomy picture of two figures divided by a high wall, entitled *Separate Worlds*, suggests 'an inability to communicate'.

Mr Mandelson's preference for gloom is exposed in *The Secret Art of Government*, a documentary examining the mystery-shrouded Government Art Collection.

The programme reveals the Government's efforts to ensure that the collection reflects the vision of a re-branded, modern Britain.

Out go paintings of fox hunting and Lady Thatcher's beloved portraits of Wellington and Nelson at Number 10, in comes a painting of sperm and colourful modern abstracts.

Though Mr Mandelson does not appear in the film, he is reported by art collection staff to have taken a considerable interest in his selection, paying two visits to the collection's Soho headquarters.

New Labour's preference for contemporary art works and determination to display modern British talent in government buildings in the UK and overseas has brought disruption to the previously calm world of the GAC.

'They were all very keen to get rid of their predecessors and choose what almost seems to be a party line of "big, bright, modern works," reports one official.

The demand has uncovered a problematic lack of big paintings of key Labour Party figures of this century, leaving people like John Prescott, deputy prime minister, and Frank Dobson, Health Secretary, to make do with busts or portraits of Oliver Cromwell.

Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, meanwhile, is seen pointedly demanding the removal of a grand portrait of a Nepalese prince from an ornate conference room. The picture does not convey 'the modern image I would like', he tells aides, adding: 'The problem is all the paintings that big are all backward looking and ideologically unsound.'

Lady Thatcher, touring Number 10, is seen nodding wistfully at mantelpieces which once held favourite



Lady Thatcher back at Number 10, 'not a place for contemporary art' PHOTOGRAPH TIM ANDERSON

busts of British heroes. She says of Tony Blair's modern choices: 'I don't think any contemporary art here really goes. The place does not lend itself to contemporary art.'

John Major, whose painting of WG Grace was unceremoniously carried out of Number 10 by removal men last May, is equally wary of the trend for modernity. 'I think

it is very silly. I think you should look at art as art. If it is good art, then hang it, enjoy it. To banish art and hold it in a cupboard as some people choose to do because it depicts things that might not be politically correct seems to me folly.'

The Secret Art of Government will be broadcast on BBC2 on June 13 at 7pm.

His chosen paintings included *Separate Worlds*, a painting examining 'loneliness, frustration and the inability to communicate', by Michael Salaman, and *Deaf in Venice* — a portrait of John Ruskin by Chris Orr.

Hanging votes

Margaret Thatcher: Loved her Portrait of Wellington and Portrait of Nelson. Also liked a portrait of the actress Ellen Terry by George Watts — a favourite of Charlie Blair, too. Though not a great fan of Henry Moore, she displayed the statue Reclining Figure: Open Pose.

John Major: His favourite painting, always shown first to visitors, was *Paris Plage*, by William Frederick May, a gentle beach scene. He also liked *The Badminton Game*, by David Inshaw — the most modern of his favourites — *Lady on a Safety Bicycle*, by John Lavery, and *Recluse*, by Winifred Nicholson.

Peter Mandelson: His chosen paintings included *Separate Worlds*, a painting examining 'loneliness, frustration and the inability to communicate', by Michael Salaman, and *Deaf in Venice* — a portrait of John Ruskin by Chris Orr.

Chris Smith: Defines his own preferred artistic themes as mountain scenes — reminding him of his love of hill-walking; romantic painting; and brightness and colour. His favourite painting is *Portrait of Alton Peters*, a 1988 work by Craigie Aitchison. Other on his office walls include *Dancers* (1973), by Stephen Buckley, a Jacob Epstein sculpture of the conductor Otto Klemperer, and a James Dickson Innes landscape entitled *Mountain, Wales*.

Patient cash may divert to 2000 bug

Sarah Boseley and David Goss

CASH-starved NHS trusts will be forced to divert tens of millions of pounds from caring for patients to making up lost time in ensuring that their computer systems do not crash through the impact of the millennium bug, government advisers warned yesterday.

Don Cruickshank, chairman of Action 2000, the campaign to beat the computer glitch that could halt Britain's essential services at the start of the year 2000, said some trusts were up to nine months late in their preparations.

He said: 'Some trusts are between three and nine months behind private sector firms in getting their plans ready and will have to make it a key priority. Any trusts which are laggards will have to divert money from patient care.'

Amid fears that hospital wards could be closed and care-staff numbers reduced because of the squeeze on budgets, it emerged that the head of the NHS Executive, Alan Langlands, has admitted that some trusts and health authorities will be unable to safeguard their computers from malfunctioning come the millennium.

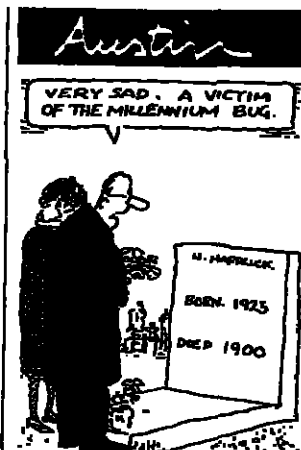
After originally urging them to have all their 'mission critical' systems fixed by the end of this year, he has now acknowledged that some might need effective contingency plans instead.

In a letter of guidance to trusts and health authorities, leaked to *Computer Weekly*, he says: 'The possibility of very serious failures directly affecting patient care and safety must not be underestimated. Under such circumstances, all possible steps must be taken to minimise the risks of problems and their impact if they do.'

Confirming that the NHS may not be bug-free by January 1, 2000, a NHS Executive spokesman said systems essential for the running of hospitals — ensuring patient safety must be compliant. If they are not, Mr Langlands said in the letter, detailed plans must be made 'for coping with those systems of equipment that cannot be repaired or replaced in time.'

Mr Cruickshank's predecessor under the Conservatives, Robin Guenier, head of Taskforce 2000, an independent group that still advises the Government, said the NHS was up to 18 months late and that if ministers did not provide extra money to tackle the problem patients would suffer.

'I'm not suggesting trusts



'Some trusts are between three and nine months behind... laggards will have to divert money from patient care'

Don Cruickshank, chairman of Action 2000

would be forced to find the extra money by taking away nurses or closing wards but they might have to raid other IT projects designed to sustain and improve patient care at a time when their budgets are already under tremendous pressure. The longer the delay in sorting out the problem the more it costs.'

Tony Blair promised this year that there would be no material disruption to essential services such as health, power, water and telecommunications because of the bug but insisted that no extra money would be given to the NHS and other public sector bodies to meet the estimated £3 billion bill.

Mr Guenier estimates that the conservative cost to the NHS alone will be £750 million compared with the £320 million set aside to eradicate the bug — and that it could be substantially more, requiring the Department of Health to find an extra £1 billion.

Mr Cruickshank, who is setting up three working groups to co-ordinate contingency plans for essential services, including a core group of executives from basic utilities, said water companies were behind schedule and pressed them for greater public disclosure of their plans.

Mounting wave of air and rail strikes threaten World Cup chaos

Jon Henley in Paris

A WEEK before the kick-off of the World Cup transport chaos came a step closer to reality yesterday as striking Air France pilots showed no sign of reaching agreement with their bosses and train drivers

announced a walkout on the tournament's first two days. The Socialist-led government, increasingly worried that the country's reputation will be shredded before the eyes of billions of television viewers, accused the pilots of holding the country to ransom and said it backed Air France's cost-cutting plans.

Criticising the pilots' 'lack of civic-mindedness', the interior minister, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, said their action brought him 'sadness, almost shame'.

The World Cup, which begins on Wednesday with a match between Scotland and Brazil, is being held in 10 cities around the country.

Airline, and particularly rail, strikes could leave hundreds of thousands of fans stranded. Further upping the pressure, the Communist-led CGT union announced a one-day walkout today by its members on the Paris Métro and suburban RER services, and drivers and conductors belonging to three unions at the

national railway company, SNCF, are striking from this evening until Saturday morning.

The most direct threat to the World Cup comes from train drivers in the FGAAC union, which gave notice yesterday of a strike from June 9, the eve of the World Cup, to June 11. The union, which

represents 30 per cent of SNCF drivers, warned that it could prolong the stoppage if it was not satisfied with the pay negotiations.

The SNPL union, which represents 60 per cent of Air France's 3,200 pilots, said it was prepared to fight 'as long as necessary' against the management's proposal to cut

pilots' salaries by 15 per cent in return for share options in the company.

'The strike is continuing. It will probably be long. Its effects will probably be devastating for the image of the company and its bank account,' the union chairman, Jean-Charles Corbet, said as talks with the

management resumed yesterday afternoon.

Announcing yesterday that France had successfully dismantled a suspected network supporting the Algerian terrorist group GIA, Mr Chevènement said 7,000 police would guard the 10 Cup stadiums and 1,850 soldiers patrol tourist sites and public transport.

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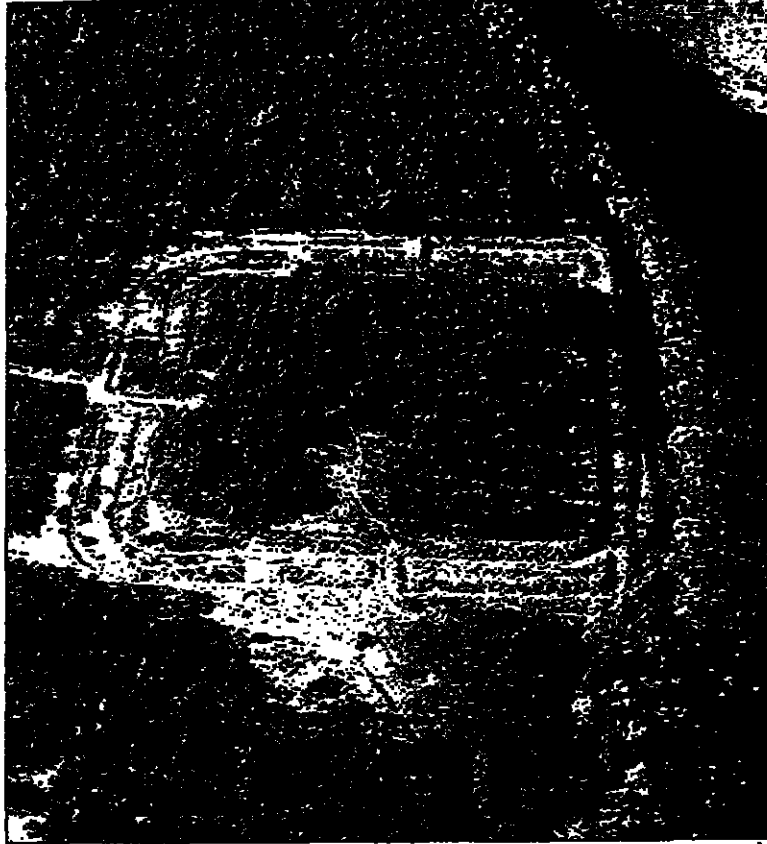
Ancient monuments have disappeared at a rate of one a day since 1945, and prospects for what is left look bleak. Maev Kennedy reports

Fear for England's vanishing heritage

This gun emplacement — once securely inland — at East Mersea, Essex, has disappeared because of coastal erosion since this picture was taken about three years ago



Commercial forestry is blurring the outlines of a well-preserved Roman fort at Cawthorpe Camp, North Yorkshire



A Museum of London archaeologist at work in foundations at No 1, Poultry, a development site in the City of London, where Roman, Saxon and medieval remains have been found



EVERY day since 1945 at least one ancient monument in England has been destroyed, the first survey of English archaeological sites has revealed.

This adds up to more than 22,000 monuments destroyed — 16 per cent of all those recorded — mainly by development, road building and agriculture.

The English Heritage Monuments at Risk Survey (Mars), published yesterday, took five years to complete and cost £1 million. It estimates that 4,500 monuments are at high risk over the next five years, and 65,000 are at some risk out of an estimated total of 300,000.

Archaeological sites on agricultural land are being lost at the equivalent of 10 football pitches a day, and the situation is even bleaker when the partial destruction of monuments and the condition of surviving monuments is considered.

"They all stack up to something of a horror story," said Timothy Darvill, of Bournemouth University, who headed the survey.

"We knew more or less what the situation was about the monuments which have been totally destroyed; the really bad news is the scale of piecemeal destruction, slicing away at monuments year after year until there is nothing left."

The survey enabled him to predict the bad news for the next two years: 153 monuments will be lost to urbanisation, 32 to gravel and mineral extraction. "It is more than likely already too late to save them."

The sites range from prehistoric earthworks ploughed

out by modern agriculture, to 20th century fortifications toppling into the sea through coastal erosion. Development, quarrying, unsympathetic land use and agriculture are identified as the main threats, and all are projected to increase in the next five years.

In 1945, 95 per cent of surviving monuments were regarded as being reasonably complete. That figure has

tary of the Society of Antiquaries which has represented archaeologists for 300 years, welcomed the report.

"This is the most important thing that has ever happened in field archaeology — it takes it out of the realm of amateur stamp collecting and on to a proper scientific basis for the first time."

"This will allow us to go to Europe over the Common



'Piecemeal destruction is slicing at monuments year after year until there's nothing left'

Timothy Darvill

since fallen to 76 per cent. The report provoked immediate demands for a tougher and more active approach from English Heritage, the state's official custodian of archaeological sites.

Rob Young, chairman of Rescue, which represents field archaeologists, said: "The statistic of one monument lost a day is a truly horrific one, and not something that English Heritage can afford to be complacent about. The question now is what are they going to do to tighten up protection of monuments?"

Dai Morgan-Evans, secre-

etary of the Society of Antiquaries which has represented archaeologists for 300 years, welcomed the report.

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hard to interpret, and some 15,000 were surveyed on the ground.

The findings were then extrapolated for the whole country on the basis of the county sites and monuments records, which are extremely patchy.

Agriculture, particularly ploughing for arable use, was identified as the main cause of piecemeal destruction, and unrecorded changes in land use as the least regulated threat. Ancient field systems lying in arable land were identified as the monuments most at risk.

At present English Heritage has £300,000 of its £10 million budget for archaeology to give grants to take land out of arable use. Chief archaeologist Geoffrey Wainwright said the survey proved this was inadequate. The Chancellor Gordon Brown can expect another call on his budget surplus.

The report was the first attempt to determine the national state of archaeological sites at a time of growing crisis for local archaeological services. Hard-up local authorities are slashing archaeological budgets, and senior staff are being made redundant in many areas. In Berkshire only an emergency grant from English Heritage prevented a collapse of the service.

Since 1990, government planning guides have required archaeology to be considered in planning applications, with the result that almost all field archaeology rescue archaeology paid for by developers. The estimates are £50 million in developer funding, as against under £10 million in state funding.

Asylum seekers' riot 'set off after rumours of killings by Group 4'

Alan Travis, Home Affairs Editor

ASYLUM SEEKERS rioted in Britain's biggest immigration detention camp because they believed the private security company, Group 4, had strangled and murdered two detainees, a court was told yesterday.

Group 4 staff were attacked with dumb-bells, a kitchen was wrecked, a shop looted, and the library set ablaze during the riot at Campsfield House, near Oxford, on August 20 last year.

The riot, which triggered the disturbance was disclosed at the opening yesterday of the trial at Oxford crown court of nine West African asylum seekers, all charged with offences of riot and violent disorder which carry penalties of up to 10 years.

Nicholas Jarman, outlining the prosecution case, told the jury that during the riot a large crowd of detainees made a serious attempt to break out of the main gate and held up banners saying:

"Two people were strangled today by Group 4. We believe they are dead."

It took Group 4 riot squads equipped with shields and batons, police officers with dogs, and private security reinforcements from as far afield as Rochdale and Hull to restore order.

Mr Jarman told the jury that the day before the riot there had been several incidents which had led to unrest. "However efficiently a place such as Campsfield House is run, it is almost inevitable that misunderstandings will occur between staff and detainees, and that gossip and rumour amongst the detainees will fuel discord," he said.

As a result of the unrest it had been decided to transfer to other centres two of the detainees the following morning, but when this was done the mood became angry and there were accusations that Group 4 had killed or strangled them.

Some of the detainees confronted the Group 4 staff and attacked one officer.

An emergency procedure

code-named Operation Thunderstorm was put into practice, with staff retreating to secure areas, but some of the detainees armed themselves with weapons including dumb-bells from the weights room.

"Missiles were thrown at officers, windows smashed, telephones and surveillance cameras destroyed, the shop was ransacked, the kitchen wrecked and the library also set ablaze."

Mr Jarman said a large crowd of detainees advanced on the main gate and tried to force it, and staff in riot gear were used to contain them. Police and reinforcements were summoned and during the day order was slowly restored.

The accused, who deny the charges, are Sunny Oxide, Stanley Nwadike, Edward Onabango Agor, Lucky Agbeko, Sambo Marong, John Quaqueh, Enahoro Esemuze and Harrison Tubman. An order was made yesterday preventing the naming of the ninth defendant as he is a minor.

Mr Jarman told the jury

that all nine were amongst the group who tried to force the gate. The crowd also held placards made of cardboard which read: "We want justice". He said that during the disturbance the detainees made repeated threats to Group 4 staff that they were going to set fire to the centre.

Giving some background, Mr Jarman told the court that Campsfield House was the largest immigration detention centre in Britain and had opened in November 1993. Although it was intended to provide a secure hostel environment with as much free association for the detainees as possible, its perimeter was marked by a high fence.

The detainees were held there under immigration law because they had been either refused entry, were overstayers, or made subject to deportation orders. Others were detained while their claims for asylum were investigated.

The detention centre was monitored by 16 cameras outside and 16 inside, the view from each being transmitted to a central control room. The trial continues.

BBC strike to hit news bulletins

Stuart Miller

BBC news and current affairs programmes will be reduced to a rump today as thousands of technical staff hold the first of a series of one-day walkouts which could threaten the corporation's much-vaunted summer of sport.

Organisers of the broadcasting union, Bectu, predict up to 10,000 of the 21,000 staff in radio and television will support the stoppage, disrupting all live programming.

The most high profile casualties are expected to be BBC TV's Breakfast News and Radio 4's Today programme. Other Radio 4 programmes likely to be cancelled include the World at One, PM, and the World Tonight, while Radio 5 Live is expected to be badly hit.

Pared-down TV news programmes will go ahead using management for technical support, and Newsnight is expected to go out, although in a scaled-down format. The rolling TV news service, News 24, could be another casualty.

Coverage of the first cricket Test between England and South Africa at Edgbaston is likely to escape unscathed, union organisers said, but work on other programmes will be affected, with soaps and drama a particular target.

Tube faces disruption as workers back action against privatisation

LONDON'S transport system faces large-scale disruption, probably within 10 days, after Underground workers voted yesterday to strike over John Prescott's plan to privatise part of the Tube, says *Seamus Milne*.

Leaders of the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union — the Deputy Prime Minister's own union — will today fix the dates for the walkouts, set to be the first direct industrial challenge to government policy by a union since the general election.

RMT members on the London Underground, including train drivers and station staff, voted by 2,471 to 462 to take industrial action over the impact of

the plans on jobs, pay and conditions.

The Government hopes to raise £7 billion over 15 years to invest in the Underground as part of a public-private partnership, which would allow up to three private contractors to take over track and signalling, while LU would retain control of train operations.

That would mean thousands of workers transferring to the private sector. Bob Crow, RMT assistant general secretary, said LU had refused to discuss the protection of existing agreements or to guarantee no compulsory redundancies.

An LU spokesman said it was too early to discuss future terms and conditions.

Gerry Morrissey, Bectu's head of broadcasting, said: "What we'll see is work stopping on a new drama, *Vanity Fair*, a day's shooting will be lost of *EastEnders*, and they'll stop transporting people over to France to prepare for the World Cup."

The stoppage is going ahead even though the union met BBC management at the conciliation service, Acas, yesterday for "talks about talks".

aimed at finding a basis for full negotiations to break the deadlock.

"BBC staff have voted in unprecedented numbers to take strike action, and despite giving the BBC nearly two weeks to reopen negotiations, they have not done so," said Mr Morrissey.

"I expect major support for our day of action as members are aware that this is about the future of the BBC and

their future employment prospects."

But Margaret Salmon, the BBC's director of personnel, said: "It is very disappointing that while discussions under the auspices of Acas have begun, Bectu have not called off their strike action."

"Strike action is particularly disappointing when it threatens the programme schedules. This lets down viewers and listeners, damages the BBC and is likely to jeopardise rather than protect jobs."

In Bectu ballots last month, more than 70 per cent of voters supported the industrial action.

A second 24-hour stoppage is scheduled for next Tuesday. Members of other unions are expected to work as usual. The dispute is over three areas of management policy, which the unions believe will lead to increased job insecurity and lower wages.

The corporation is proposing to turn its resources directorate, which provides outside broadcast and programme-making facilities, into a wholly owned private company, Resources Ltd, in a move that unions fear is a precursor to full privatisation.

The BBC has also altered the way it pays some staff, and plans to introduce "multi-skilling" across the corporation.

Nuclear arms powerless to stop asteroids hitting Earth, say scientists

TO SAVE the Earth from an asteroid heading straight for us would be far from easy, according to a study published today.

It had been thought that nuclear blasts could deflect or break up an asteroid. But scientists have found that some types could sustain a powerful nuclear explosion and maintain the collision course.

Erik Asphaug, an astronomer at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and colleagues, used computer simulations to study the effects of powerful impacts on asteroids. They found that the outcome depended on the asteroid's structure.

Many of these bodies are not single rocks but aggregates of debris left over from previous collisions. They might consist of a few large fragments held together by gravity or "rubble piles" — numerous smaller pieces.

The study, reported in the journal *Nature*, showed that the porous nature of such asteroids would absorb shock waves from a

nuclear explosion, limiting its effect to a localised area.

"It's a lot more difficult to nudge them around than we had thought," said Mr Asphaug. "More work needs to be done before we can decide whether nuclear warheads provide a viable deterrent."

At the opposite extreme, a solid rock asteroid when blasted might shatter into smaller pieces which might form a family of smaller asteroids or come together to form a rubble pile.

Hundreds of thousands of

asteroids in the vicinity of Earth would have an impact as disastrous as the largest thermonuclear device ever exploded in tests, although the likelihood of one hitting Earth was small, said Mr Asphaug.

"Asteroids are not an imminent threat, and I am far more concerned about what human beings are doing to the planet. But in case we ever identify an asteroid or comet on a collision course, it would be best to know our enemy so that we can get it before it gets us."

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The most secret crime

The Coventry diocese acted in classic fashion. They conducted no formal inquiry, nor did they call in the police or the social services

Is the church forgiving sin or just turning a blind eye?

In the third part of our major investigation of paedophilia, Nick Davies reveals that the church has not only failed to deal with abuse but also with the more subtle cases where no law has been broken and there is merely a cause for concern

The most secret crime



Cloistered... the Bishop of Coventry, Simon Barrington-Ward (front, third from left) with Aspinall behind him PHOTOGRAPH: COVENTRY EVENING TELEGRAPH

ON PALM Sunday last year, the Rector of St Peter's Anglican Church in Coventry ended his service with a brief announcement: his assistant, the Rev Phil Aspinall, he said, had been forced to take leave of absence due to pressure of work.

The congregation filed out of the church unaware that they had been misled. The Rector had not wanted to mislead them, but his superiors had told him he must. The truth he could not tell was that the Rev Phil Aspinall was absent from church that day because he had been arrested by Coventry detectives who were investigating allegations about his involvement with children.

The church had been struggling with the behaviour of Aspinall for years. Colleagues and other members of the Coventry East parish had been worried by the priest's activities with young men. He had been caught with a collection of pornography. Three teenagers in different places at different times had accused him of making sexual overtures to them. The NSPCC and local Social Services had warned that he may be a risk. And yet the church had left Aspinall in his parish.

The Anglican Church is accused by many within its ranks of mishandling complaints about its priests' involvement with children, of failing to follow the kinds of procedures now commonplace in other organisations and, above all, of placing the interests of the suspect priest — or even of its own reputation — above those of the child.

Church cannot turn the other cheek without looking away. The result is that it has failed to deal not only with cases of blatant abuse but also with the far more subtle and common cases where no law has been broken and there is merely a cause for concern that it may. Such as the case of the Rev Phil Aspinall.

Aspinall had arrived at St Peter's in Coventry in 1981, a bright and charming 30-year-old who was then a lay reader and who went on to be trained and ordained as an unpaid "non-stipendiary" minister. Only a handful in the diocese knew his secret — that he had left his previous parish under a cloud of suspicion about his behaviour with adolescent boys in the church choir.

During the 1970s, Aspinall had belonged to Holy Trinity church in the centre of Coventry. It was there that he had become licensed as a lay reader. He had started to preach, helped with the youth club and been a popular supporter of the church, until several people began to worry that he was spending too much time with some of the boys in the choir. The curate had gone so far as to ask him whether he had a problem, but Aspinall had insisted there was nothing to worry about. It was shortly after that, that one of the choir boys reported to his parents that Aspinall had taken him back to his flat and showed him magazines with sexual pictures. The boy, who was 14 at the time, said that the maga-

working without being paid, living off his salary at Courtland's, the textile company, and, secondly, because he was gay and quite open about it, and his colleagues were pleased to be able to show that they suffered no prejudice. Years passed without controversy before, early in 1985, an unrecognised echo of the forgotten incident at Holy Trinity, some of Aspinall's colleagues began to worry that he was spending too much time with some of the boys in his youth club.

They noticed that he was giving late-night lifts to some of them. In particular, he seemed to spend a lot of time with a 13-year-old named Jimmy X, who came from a deeply disturbed family with a history of sexual abuse. Aspinall was regularly taking him to swimming and buying him meals and, according to some reports, drinks in pubs. The new rector, Rev David Berryman, decided to have a word with Aspinall, to warn him that his behaviour was "open to misunderstanding" and, although Aspinall insisted that there was nothing to worry about, Berryman asked one of his team, Rev Nick Blackwell, to draw up some guidelines to help Aspinall.

However, the trickle of anxiety continued to flow. There were worrying reports from the youth club, where Aspinall had appointed a deputy who seemed to be quite unable to cope, a young man who had a history of mental illness and who was occasionally reported to be spending time with a rent boy. One day, the whole club ran riot when Aspinall went off and left his deputy in charge. On another occasion, parents complained that the deputy had set up a game of spin-the-bottle in which children were pressed to talk about their sexual experience. One 13-year-old boy, at whom the bottle pointed, was told that as a forfeit he must go off with his girlfriend and "do it".

When a long-standing member of the congregation at St Peter's came forward to explain how it was that Aspinall had come to their church in the first place, the trickle of anxiety started to run faster. One of Aspinall's colleagues traced the former vicar and curate of Holy Trinity and confirmed the story. He asked for advice from the diocesan bishop who had recently been appointed as the child protection adviser for the diocese, Dr Elizabeth Pennington. She asked the Social Services and the NSPCC in the city to make discreet inquiries.

Over the next few weeks, the inquiry team spoke to other children in the youth group and discovered that Aspinall had asked one of them, a boy of 14 with learning difficulties, to come on holiday with him. They found, too, that a notable rent boy had been to the police to report an association with Aspinall and his deputy. They concluded that there was no evidence that Aspinall had broken any law, but that his behaviour clearly indicated risk.

A small group of those who were worried about Aspinall now went right to the top of the diocese, to the Bishop of Coventry, Simon Barrington-Ward. This group included Social Services and the NSPCC, and they argued that Aspinall should be suspended. In the same way as a teacher or social worker who was thought to be a possible risk to children. It soon became clear that the Church lacked the strict procedures which had been forced on other organisations by bitter experience.

Almost everyone else who works with children is now covered by "safety first" protocols which have been agreed by local authorities, police and social service across the country. Any child-worker

who is accused of inappropriate behaviour with children is asked to stop working while the allegation is investigated. The bishop and his advisers resisted the move to suspend Aspinall. There was no evidence, they said, and they might be sued. They knew Aspinall was gay and that the gay and Lesbian Christian Movement was willing to go to court on behalf of gay priests who were victimised. Some insisted this was nothing to do with the man being gay, but to do with their concern about risk to children. Finally, the bishop agreed to close the youth club and to write new guidance on child protection, but he would not agree to suspend or withdraw Aspinall's licence as a minister at St Peter's.

It was several months later, in the summer of 1986, that Jimmy X's elder sister took him to hospital with an injury. A lot of people at St Peter's were aware of Jimmy, not simply because Aspinall had been a history of sexual abuse, but because the boy's family was a notorious source of grief in the community, a rat's nest of sexual tensions in which the mother, the eldest sister and various of the sons had been involved in being raped by the father and other male members of the family. Now, Jimmy X, who was still only 14, had turned up at the hospital and started to complain that various men had made sexual overtures to him. One of those he named was the Rev Phil Aspinall. The police began an inquiry.

Among the small group who knew about this, there was now real concern. They pressed the Church to act. They argued that they were dealing with a man who had been the object of suspicion from three separate sources — from his former colleagues at Holy Trinity, from parishioners and some colleagues in Coventry East, and now from Jimmy X. But the Church said they would take no action, they would wait for the police to make their inquiries.

One of those who tried to persuade the Bishop of Coventry to act had no doubt that the Church were being weak. "If Aspinall were in social services and he were behaving inappropriately, there would be a case conference and he would be suspended. Even if there were no hard evidence of any misbehaviour, he would have to stop working with children. Aspinall's behaviour was inappropriate. But the Church are rather far behind in their understanding of these issues and they are also very afraid of being sued."

The police and social services were called to deal with Jimmy X, but the case rapidly disintegrated into chaos. The hospital had tried to divert him to a second hospital but, impatient and fearing some plot, Jimmy's sister had stormed out, and no evidence had been collected of Jimmy's injury. In his statements, the boy was unclear about the details of his story. He had a criminal record, he would clearly perform badly in court and, as if to guarantee confusion, in the midst of the inquiry, Jimmy was accused of sexually abusing his disabled 12-year-old nephew.

The police interviewed Aspinall, who denied any wrongdoing. Late in 1986, the Crown Prosecution Service

ruled there was insufficient evidence to proceed. Aspinall remained in post. The Church took no further action.

A few weeks later, at the end of January 1997, the diocese yet again was informed about a boy who was involved in controversy with Aspinall.

Sam Y came from an active Christian family. His mother sat on several parish committees and her children regularly attended churches in the city. She had suggested that her eldest son, Sam, who was then 14, might like to go to Phil's youth club.

Sam's family had thought it was odd, how much time Aspinall spent with his son, how he took him swimming, bought him meals, drove him into Birmingham and bought him CDs. They thought it was odd how Sam always seemed to have money in his pocket and how he treated Aspinall like dirt, ringing him up to order him to come round and pick him up, swearing at him. But they had not been worried until one morning in January when Sam, now aged 17, had come home from school unexpectedly and started packing his bags.

His mother had tried to find out what he was doing, where he was going, how he would look after himself when, to her surprise, Aspinall had turned up in his car and loaded Sam's bags into the boot. She had pleaded with the priest: "Why are you doing this?" But he had given her no answer. That evening, Sam's father had called Aspinall who had admitted that he had known for some time that Sam was planning to leave. He refused to tell where Sam was.

It was several months before Sam's parents traced him, to a bedsit on the other side of Coventry, and when Sam finally sat down to talk to them, their

anxiety rocketed. Red-faced and tearful, Sam told them that he had hated Aspinall, that he was disgusting. He started to tell them how one day he had been in Aspinall's flat, using his computer, when Phil had told him he was popping out for a few minutes. And then Aspinall had said: "And when I get back, I want you in that bed." Shaking, Sam refused to say any more.

The police once more investigated Aspinall. They went to his home with a search warrant and in amongst the paraphernalia of his ministry, they found a collection of pornographic photographs.

They arrested him and questioned him about his relationship with Sam Y. He admitted that he had been with Sam for some time, but he said it was a joke and insisted he had done nothing wrong.

Alerted to the arrest, the Bishop of Coventry returned to the city early from a trip. What action would he take? Would he withdraw Aspinall's licence? Would he at least suspend him? Would he at the very least say something to warn the families whom Aspinall had been dealing with? The answer was No. Rev David Berryman was told to tell the congregation that Aspinall was absent through pressure of work; the church once again waited for the police, and when the police once again reported that there was insufficient evidence to justify criminal proceedings, Aspinall himself was allowed to set the pace.

He volunteered to break his link with St Peter's and to go elsewhere — just as he had done years earlier when he left Holy Trinity. The bishop accepted his offer. And that was all. Aspinall remains a priest, entitled to preach and run youth clubs, to wear his dog collar and to enjoy the trust which it inspires. Somewhere else.

Sam Y's father was enraged. He wrote to the Bishop of Coventry to tell him that his children would go to none of the churches in east Coventry while Aspinall remained a minister. When he failed to get action, he wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury's head of staff, Bishop Frank Sargeant, at Lambeth Palace. The bishop replied that he had spoken to his opposite number in Coventry. "From what he has told me, I am entirely satisfied that all appropriate action has been taken."

Sam's father threatened to camp outside the Bishop of Coventry's home with the local press unless the bishop agreed to meet him. When finally they met, the new suffragan Bishop Anthony, insisted that there was no evidence that Aspinall

Priest guilty of child abuse faces new allegations



Charming man who won trust of A...

Anger as canon takes in paedophile

Villagers say rector must be forced out



Church says sorry to abuse victims as priest is jailed

Jail for paedophile priest who built den of iniquity



Soul searching... despite embarrassing convictions a church strategy for 'inappropriate behaviour' is still lacking

had done wrong. Since Aspinall had now left St Peter's, he added, he was no longer their problem.

Some of those who were involved with Aspinall remain deeply uneasy about the church's handling of the affair. One member of the church asked: "Why were we behaving in this way? Haven't we learned anything from the troubles in the Roman Catholic Church? Why has protection of the church's reputation been a motive for the hierarchy by and large not to grasp the nettle that they ought to?"

In an outspoken letter to the Times in January, Monsignor J Joyce of the Portsmouth Diocese Child Protection Team complained that the Catholic church had still not dealt with its problem. "There are still bishops who say that victims are lying when they accuse priests, whatever the truth of the matter, and bishops who are so protective of those so accused that the needs of the victims are pushed to one side."

Last week, senior sources in the Anglican Church confirmed two aspects of what had happened: that Aspinall's behaviour had been "inappropriate"; and yet that they had no formal mechanism for relaying a warning about a suspect priest from one diocese to another. The Rev Aspinall declined to talk to the Guardian.

The most secret crime

Three teenaged boys at different times accused him of making sexual overtures

It had strange pictures of naked people and that Aspinall had talked to him about sex and whether some people might be homosexual.

The Coventry diocese had dealt with this problem in classic fashion. They had made no attempt to discover whether other choirboys had been approached, whether any of them had suffered any harm, they conducted no formal inquiry at all, they did not call in the police or the social services, they simply shuffled the problem into another parish — St Peter's. Which had no choir.

There, the rector laid down the law to Aspinall and made it clear, among things, that he was not to work with children. However, nobody in the Church did anything to ensure that Aspinall obeyed this instruction. They did not even keep a written record of it. And so, a few years after arriving at St Peter's, when the then rector had moved on and his instruction had been all but forgotten, Aspinall started his own youth group.

There is no evidence that anyone in the parish or the diocese expressed any anxiety about this. There was a clear need for such a youth group in the deprived area of Hillfields.

Aspinall's colleagues in the Coventry East parish had two other reasons for supporting him: firstly because he was

The most secret crime

The NSPCC and local Social Services had warned he may be a risk

● The names of Jimmy X and Sam Y are false to protect the privacy of the two boys.
● The NSPCC National Child Protection Helpline offers a free 24-hour counselling, information and advice service on 0800 800 500.
TOMORROW: Why the child protection system doesn't protect the children.

Serbs claim upper hand in Kosovo as Albania fears new genocide

Holena Smith in Athens and Renter in Pristina

SERBIAN forces, accused by Albania of waging a genocidal war in Kosovo, said yesterday that they had dealt a "heavy blow" to guerrillas fighting for independence.

Serbian security sources said some 40 people, including two Serb policemen, were killed during a five-day operation against ethnic Albanian rebels in Serbia's southern province.

Albania, hit by an influx of refugees, said Kosovo was already at war.

"The situation created in Kosovo requires urgent intervention to stop the genocide there, which is now being expressed in all its force," the foreign minister, Paskal Milo, said in a television interview.

In Kosovo's capital, Pristina, ethnic Albanian leaders pleaded with Western officials for military intervention to halt what they said was a deliberate Serb strategy of forced expulsions from Kosovo, as more refugees poured

'We don't have money but we do have a million Kalashnikovs in our hands'

over the border into Albania.

By last night an estimated 5,000 refugees had crossed the border in an attempt to flee heavy shelling on frontier villages in the southern Serbian province. Most of the ethnic Albanians were women, children and elderly people. They had walked for up to 20 hours through mountains, hills and ravines.

A spokesman for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) said the majority had registered at makeshift centres in the highlands of northern Albania's Tropoje region.

Some had told locals they had fled in a "hall of bullets" from towns and villages that had come under heavy mortar, tank and machine-gun fire from elite Serbian forces in the border zone.

"There are reports that tens of thousands of others are also waiting to cross the border from Kosovo," said Andreas Delyannis at the UNHCR in Athens, who has been monitoring the situation in Kosovo. "The UNHCR is rushing relief supplies to the area and is working on an emergency

plan. This could be a huge humanitarian crisis."

Yesterday, three UNHCR trucks delivered 1,000 loaves of bread and chunks of cheese to the refugees. "Many are mentally and physically exhausted," Mr Delyannis said.

Local residents in Albania had rushed to welcome the Kosovans and many, in a flush of "Albanian patriotism", had even opened their homes to them. But government officials in Tirana said, while authorities were willing to receive "as many as possible", there was only so much Albania could do.

The highlands are the poorest part of the former Stalinist state and the Tropoje region is ill-equipped to receive the refugees. Long used as a dumping ground for political prisoners, the arid region has little in the way of infrastructure and is often described as a "dark place" by Albanians in the capital.

"We will start transferring the refugees southwards," Granoz Fashko, a senior adviser in the Socialist government, said. "We cannot cope with this situation alone and are now working around-the-clock to persuade Nato and the EU to help us."

Albania has won international praise for exercising restraint in the face of mounting clashes between Serbian security forces and Albanian separatists in Kosovo.

But Mr Fashko, one of prime minister Fatos Nano's closest confidants, said the government did not now rule out military intervention if the fighting near the border worsened. He said there were growing fears the Serbs would begin shelling entire villages along the 85-mile border.

"We cannot afford to stand by and just watch a tragedy. If the Serbs massacre people who are, after all, Albanians," he said, "it will be our moral duty to help. Our army may be weak but God knows if things have to be solved with weaponry they will be."

It is not at all sure that the Serbs would win. Highlighting that mood yesterday, even moderate Albanians in Tirana said they were preparing for the worst. Some were reported to have already begun heading towards the border armed with Kalashnikovs looted from arsenals in the anarchy that ripped through the country last year.

"Okay, we don't have money but we do have a million Kalashnikovs in our hands," said Adrian East, who runs a centre for torture victims in Tirana. "We haven't reacted so far but there are a lot of people out there who want to use them and, of course, give them to our brothers in Kosovo."



Kosovan women and children wait in the Albanian town of Tropoje. Other refugees, like the ones below, are swelling their ranks

PHOTOGRAPHS: ARMANDO BABANI AND APREN CELI

Nato sends military observer team but dithers on deploying troops

The Western alliance is holding back from entering tricky terrain but is loath to repeat the culpable delays of Bosnia

Stephen Bates in Brussels and Richard Norton Taylor

NATO yesterday grappled with the grim prospect of renewed military intervention in the Balkans in the face of the fresh wave of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo.

Ambassadors from Nato members, including Britain and the United States, met in Brussels to discuss for the first time sending troops to restore peace in the Serbian province.

Up to 23,000 military personnel could be deployed if a decision on full-scale intervention is taken by next week.

Mindful of the international storm caused by div-

isions and delays in Nato's intervention in Bosnia three years ago, the ambassadors agreed to the immediate dispatch of a team of military observers to the Albanian and Macedonian borders with Kosovo.

A senior Nato official said: "We are all agreed but we cannot go ahead until we have solid, well thought-out military advice, and that will take several days to assemble."

Germany announced yesterday it was sending a senior diplomat to the local capitals in Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo to discuss ways of containing the crisis.

A German foreign ministry statement said: "Given that there are 150,000

rejected asylum seekers from Kosovo already in Germany, the government is particularly interested in a specifically regional solution to this problem."

The military observers will report to Nato defence ministers next week on options for intervention. These range from limited action to seal and guard the borders, deploying as few as 6,000 troops, to full-scale intervention. Troops could be deployed by the end of the month. Warships are likely to be sent first to patrol the coast.

A senior Nato official said: "If anything, the intelligence reports we are receiving from Kosovo are worse than the news agencies are saying, and the death toll may be higher."

Nato advisers are holding back from intervention in a region even more remote and mountainous than Bosnia, lacking air bases and supply routes.

The official European position is that Kosovo should only be allowed greater autonomy. Other Balkan states also fear independence would lead to an enlarged ethnic Albanian country with ambitions to absorb the populations in Greece and Macedonia.

Britain has agreed to send troops to Macedonia in the autumn but has not committed itself further.

British officials said a relatively small number of troops would be needed if their mandate was confined to monitoring, but many more — perhaps 20,000 — would be needed to seal the border between Kosovo and Albania.

The Foreign Office said yesterday: "Nothing is being ruled out at this stage." It also said a decision could be made by the contact group on Kosovo to impose strict sanctions against Belgrade, including a ban on investment.



Short attacks 'unnecessary' charity appeal for Sudan

Owen Bowcott

THE public emergency appeal which has raised millions of pounds for charities to feed the starving in southern Sudan is unnecessary and misleading, the International Development Secretary, Clare Short, claimed yesterday.

In a speech which bewildered aid agencies, Ms Short insisted governments could fund all the aid required in the region.

Negative images of famines in Third World countries were not set in the broader context, she said, claiming they could induce compassion fatigue. Not a lack of compassion but a sense of being overwhelmed with problems you cannot solve.

Some non-governmental organisations were also to blame for encouraging such attitudes, she added.

The Government contributed more than £10 million to United Nations aid efforts in southern Sudan earlier this year, Ms Short said. The problem there was one of "access to resources", she suggested, adding that by launching fresh appeals "the pressure on the combatants to declare a ceasefire was relaxed".

She said: "The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) made what I believe to have been an unnecessary appeal. The message this sent to the

public was 1. Lack of money is the cause of the crises, and 2. Developing countries are characterised by constant suffering, failure and famine.

"In the case of Sudan there was no need to fundraise. Money was not the problem. We and other donors are providing substantial funds and we are prepared to provide more if that is required. Through its appeal, I believe that the DEC muddled the message about the cause of the problem: the persistence of civil war and the desperate need to end it."

The DEC, which co-ordinates major disaster appeals in Britain, is a consortium of 15 of the largest aid charities, among them Oxfam, Save the Children and the Red Cross.

Ms Short said she had invited aid agencies to talk to her about how they could help get the "real development story across to the public", and help people understand the causes of poverty.

The good news of rapid progress around the world in poverty eradication was not presented to the public, she said.

"We live at a time when humanity has made greater progress in reducing poverty and promoting development than ever before in human history. More children are educated, fewer die young, more people live longer, fewer women die in childbirth and more have clean water and sanitation."

That progress should foster optimism, rather than fatalism, she said.

The DEC yesterday dismissed Ms Short's criticisms. "It is very wrong to say that the appeal prevented a ceasefire occurring," said a spokesman.

"We have a crisis there and we have got to get aid in to save lives. We have seen no evidence of any compassion fatigue. There is a shortage of money to pay for aid in the Sudan. The UN's project was 30 per cent underfunded."

Amid chaos in the wake of the volcanic eruption on Montserrat, Clare Short last August dismissed islanders' demands as unreasonable, adding: "They will be demanding golden elephants next."

Do-gooders taken to task



Last month she accused Amnesty International of carping. "The discourse on human rights has got stuck in a denunciation of abuses of civil and political rights. While this is important, it is very carping and does not see human rights as work in progress."

Also last month she warned of the danger of compassion fatigue if aid agencies persisted with appeals that made people "flinch and turn away".

And yesterday, the charity appeal for Sudan was dismissed. "In the case of Sudan there was no need to fundraise. Money was not the problem."

News in brief

UN shown new evidence of Baghdad's 'lies'

UNITED Nations weapons inspectors yesterday sought to boost arming support for their efforts in Iraq by presenting U2 spy-plane photographs and other previously undisclosed intelligence material which point to persistent dissembling by Baghdad, writes Mark Tran in New York.

In a briefing to the UN Security Council, Richard But-

ler, the chief UN weapons inspector, laid out the areas in which Iraq has yet to satisfy Uncom, the UN special commission in charge of tracking Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction.

Mr Butler said Iraq still had to provide full and detailed information on missile propellants, VX and other germ warfare weapons, and biological weapons. According to a Brit-

ish government report from February, Iraq has not accounted for 4,000 tons of precursors for chemical weapons and more than 31,000 chemical warfare munitions.

The briefing was a "devastating blow to Iraq's credibility", Bill Richardson, the US envoy to the UN, said. "If it wants sanctions to be lifted, Iraq has lots of progress to make."

Three killed by Tehran bombs

Iranian officials confirmed yesterday that at least three people had died in two bomb attacks on public buildings in Tehran, writes Julian Borger.

The Iraqi-based opposition movement Mujahedin-e Khalq claimed responsibility for both attacks on Tuesday, at a revolutionary court and building of the Revolutionary Guard militia.

Turkish PM to quit

Turkey's prime minister, Mesut Yilmaz, is to resign at the end of the year, and an early general election will be held in April 1999, Mr Yilmaz announced yesterday, Chris Morris in Ankara writes. The Social Democratic Party has agreed to back reforms in parliament in return for the resignation.

Border battles

Heavy fighting erupted yesterday between Ethiopian and Eritrean troops fighting for disputed territory, witnesses said. Eritrea accused Addis Ababa of invasion. — Reuters.

Books burned

A Russian Orthodox bishop ordered a school publicly to burn "heretical" writings by leading Orthodox theologians, highlighting deep divisions in the Church, the Moscow Times said yesterday. The books, by three priests, were confiscated from students in a religious school and burned last month on the orders of Bishop Nikon of Yekaterinburg. — AP.

Two jailed for Cools killing

THE mystery surrounding the assassination of the former Belgian deputy prime minister Andre Cools was partly resolved yesterday in a Tunisian court where two hired gunmen were jailed for 25 years, writes Stephen Bates in Brussels.

Abdelmajid el Almi, aged 33, and Abdeljellil Ben Ibrahim, aged 26, were found guilty of the manslaughter of Cools and of wounding his

mistress outside her flat in the east Belgian city of Liege in July 1991.

"Now that the underlings have been tried here, we must go back to those who issued the order," said Cools's son Marcel outside the court.

Cools, aged 64, a local party boss in the Liege had fallen out with former protégés. Days before he was shot, he had said he would expose unnamed colleagues.

Minister pilloried for plain-speaking

Even MacAskill Chief Political Correspondent

CLARE Short sighed. She had just given a journalist a briefing about her views on dealing with world poverty and realised he was not going to write a single word. "You want a row story, don't you," she said wearily.

The International Development Secretary is in a now situation. She has a reputation for being "gaffe-prone" and everything she says is seen through that prism. Even when she gives anonymous interviews, some in the media will skew her words, claiming she has made another gaffe.

The irony is that the crit-

cism is often made by the same people who lament that Labour politicians are bland and afraid to go off-message. Ms Short says what she thinks, at least most of the time, which is more often than many of her colleagues.

She has a coherent, albeit debatable, policy for tackling Third World poverty. It is not an easy or fashionable analysis. It means she does not fully sign up to campaigns such as the one calling for cancellation of Third World debt.

Her argument is that cancelling or reducing debt will not solve Third World problems. What is more important is to provide money to help those countries become sustainable.

Her criticism of fundrais-

ing efforts for Sudan has to be seen against this background. She argued it was misleading to present the famine as an economic problem: she identified the cause as the civil war.

She also argued that huge advances have been made in the Third World over the past few decades and that repeatedly showing scenes of extreme poverty makes the public pessimistic about the Third World.

When criticising Amnesty International, she was not saying human rights abuses did not happen but, like poverty, they had to be seen in proportion: there was much more to the Third World than poverty and corrupt regimes.

The comment that will haunt her is her seemingly

cautious remark, amid the chaos of the Montserrat volcano eruption, that the islanders would be asking for "a golden elephant" next. She does not deny that, but her advisers say she was referring to the islanders' demand for money for an airport. She felt the money could be better spent on other projects to help rebuild economic life.

She is not Saint Clare and some colleagues do not like her. One minister, on hearing an announcement of more Government money for the Third World, said: "Good, as long as that bitch does not get the credit."

But at least she says what she thinks, and that has been rare in the Labour government over the past 18 months.

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Afghan too slow

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You go to the store near you

Diary

Matthew Norman

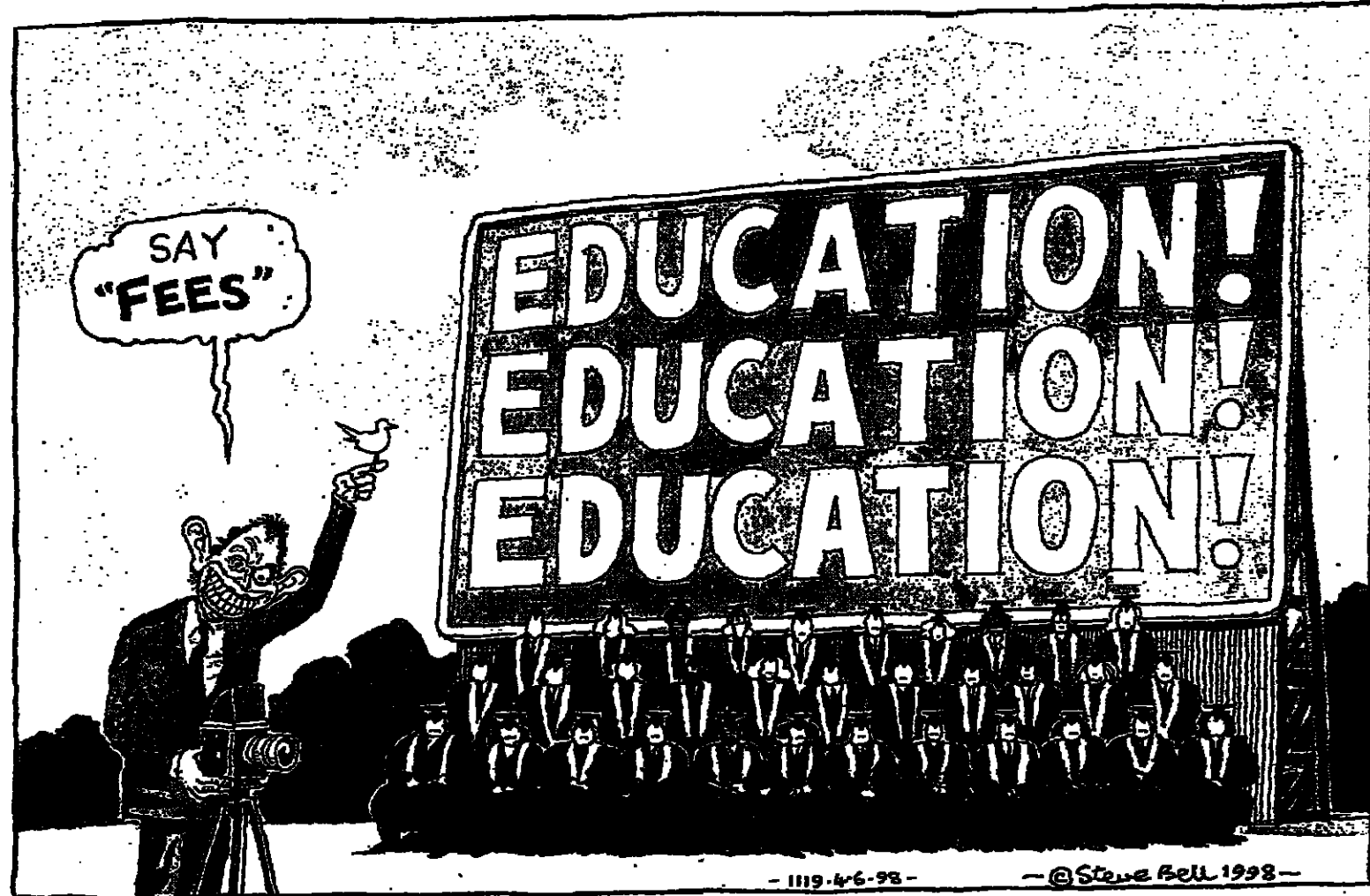
AT Westminster, New Labour High Command shows ever more trust in the people we elected to represent us. Just before the Whitson break, MPs' papers flashed up a message: "Colleagues are reminded that it is policy," it read, "not to respond to surveys and questionnaires. They are rarely intended to help the Labour Party. This also applies to the 'Diary' surveys of MPs' partners and spouses." How splendid. Or, as one MP put it, "the thought police are extending to partners now." It is too early to say if this edict will be extended to blood relatives and domestic servants — it does definitely cover some household pets, however: parrots and certain species of mynah bird are forbidden from talking to the media — but the Diary can clarify one point. Although spouses of backbenchers are forbidden from answering surveys, it is fine for Cherie Booth to appear in court on behalf of those suing her husband's government.

NEWSNIGHT on Tuesday was graced by Dolly Draper. New Labour's Arthur Daley joined Christine Hancock and Diane Abbott to debate public spending, and he soon hit peak form, telling Diane: "Ordinary working class people, believe me, want a stable economy." It is a joy to learn that nothing deters Dolly from his role as interpreter of proletarian aspirations. Indeed, while dining at the Groucho, he speaks of little else. The ordinary working class need you, Dolly, now more than ever. We know you will not fail them.

AND so, as promised, to the aesthetic taste of Dolly's old boss. As revealed in next week's BBC2 documentary *The Secret Art of Government*, Robin Cook replaced a huge picture with an enormous mirror... but what did Mandy Mandel choose from GAC, the Whitehall department that dispenses art? An etching by modern representational painter Chris Orr, it seems, of John Ruskin's eccentric wedding night in Venice. On discovering that his new wife possessed public hair, Ruskin was so horrified that he never consummated the marriage or went near her again... and Mandy's picture portrays that very scene. Ruskin looks out over the water, an agonised look on his face, and underneath a gondolier serenades, although it is unclear whom. As for his poor wife, she lies on the bed, legs apart, examining the source of her husband's disgust in a mirror, racked by sexual frustration. An intriguing choice by Mandy.

MEANWHILE, a shock rumour reaches us about the *Isom* member for Hartlepool. A source calls to report an encounter at the astro turf football pitch at Market Road, Irlington on Sunday with Alastair Campbell. "Looking rather lost, and out of shape". When Al asked, most politely (you see, he can do it when he tries), "which dressing room the Downing Street unit team was in, the source went off to enquire. A referee told him, and then came out with a most astonishing claim. "Have you heard," he told our source, "that Mandelson's playing as well?" Only Wegg-Prosser is not returning his pager messages (bad Oofy), while Downing Street is coy. "Are you from the Diary?" says a press officer. "Well, no one is available to talk."

THE first contender for June's PC Brains is Wisconsin police chief Richard Williams. It has long been Williams's policy, by way of a safeguard against burglars, to hide his revolver in an unlikely place when at home off-duty, and on one recent Saturday, the Northern Echo reports, he chose the oven. On Sunday, he decided to roast a turkey, and in accordance with accepted roasting practice turned the oven up to 350 degrees, inserted the bird and went for a nap. "Shortly thereafter," says police spokesman Jean Kerr, "boom!" A round of bullets was fired through the oven and into a hall baunister, and Mr Williams suspended himself for violating his own firearms policy.



There's a fatal flaw in Gordon Brown's burning ambition to be PM one day

Hugo Young



IN DEFENCE of conservative economics, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown stand shoulder to shoulder, the twin dogmatists of fiscal prudence. Never since Jim Callaghan and Denis Healey presided over the ruinous collapse of the public finances have Chancellor and Prime Minister been more at one on how these should be sustained. By contrast with Blairism, Thatcherism was a creed of dissenters and apostates. The lady's Chancellors never stopped arguing with her about what it meant. Unwilling the code that will inform his spending for the rest of the Parliament, Mr Brown is, *inter alia*, deepening his claim as heir, very apparent and deeply presumptuous, to the continuity which, in due course, he hopes to capture from his friend.

Yet something flaws this expectation. The succession is a vital component of Mr Brown's life-plan, but cannot be relied on. I would say it is becoming less not more likely, as time passes. In fact, I believe it probably will not happen. Mr Brown is not only the nodal figure of New Labour's conservatism but is cast to be the conspicuous victim of its radicalism.

The core meaning of New Labour is being fashioned in the furnace, and Brown is its chief artificer. His thinking, which in this major respect is identical with Blair's, dominates the scene. The pursuit of fiscal rigour, much exceeding what the Tories achieved, won't be deflected by any of the distractions that have distinguished progressives from Tories, which usually have some connection with public spending. Completely different aspirations are being planted in the public mind from the ones preached by Harold Wilson or John Smith.

let alone Nye Bevan. Nor is there any serious cabinet argument against that. Those who might challenge it, especially Robin Cook, are weakened. Most spending ministers are completely overruled by Brown. The reshuffle will confirm this. Mr Blair is embarrassed by how long the reshuffle is taking, and feels he may need, for presentational reasons, to sack more ministers now than he would have done at Easter: a big purge, to justify the time it's taken. Margaret Beckett and Jack Cunningham are becoming as vulnerable as the written-off David Clark and Gavin Strang. But on the spending front, this will change nothing. There's no challenge to which Brown pays attention, nor need he have the slightest fear of this prime minister rattling on the perfectionist Treasury axioms he has now laid down.

But Mr Brown's other agenda is becoming more problematic. A newly ingratiating minister schmoozes in the corridors, and entertains his hoped-for friends. In a quest that is likely to find, when his time comes, that it's impossible for a full-blown Scotsman to get elected leader of the Labour Party.

The delegitimising of the Scot in British national politics is in danger of happening. In short, he will probably find, when his time comes, that it's impossible for a full-blown Scotsman to get elected leader of the Labour Party.

Even more salutary, however, is the door it may be closing to Scottish politicians at Westminster. One absolute disqualifier from future promotion, at any level of minister, is going to be Scottishness. There's an awakening sense in government circles that the English will not stand for it. The national fissures are appearing, as the political system prefigures the kind of resentment and rivalry that half-baked devolution, without any considered reference to the English question, was always likely to engender. It's just happening quicker than expected.

THE apex stands the infamous West Lothian question, and at the tip of that sits the lurking figure of Gordon Brown, prime minister presumptive. He could turn out to be disastrously compromised. Here he would be, an MP lacking a democratic mandate for half the business he stood at the Despatch Box to defend. His own imagined, in Dumfries, would have elected someone else to deal with education, health, crime, housing, agriculture, housing, social work, and sent them to Edinburgh. On all

those matters and more, Prime Minister Brown would be a hollow figure, almost an impostor, his legitimacy inadequately reinforced by the larger questions he was left with — foreign policy, defence, macro-economics.

Brown and his people must be well aware of this. No politician who thinks as obsessively as they do about the next job could have failed to consider the misfortune that devolution, of which Brown was always a strong proponent, would visit on him. Their time-horizon is doubtless shorter. They just want to be certain that, if Blair does disappear soon, there won't be another mistake about who the next leader ought to be. In any case, the enormity of the price that Scotchness may yet exact must be intolerable to contemplate. It portends a systemic crisis for the working-out of modern Britishness, perhaps some kind of slow crack-up. From Brown it might snatch the prize his life awaits.

If I'm right, though, he could re-think that life, which is the most destructive curiosity of modern politics. He makes these landmark speeches. They define an economic strategy nobody has the power to challenge. They hold the key to economic Blairism. He and the leader, vying for the greater rigour, converge on an analysis to which they bring the passion of men equally determined against any short-term seduction. Yet there is no axis between them. What should be exceptionally strong is weakened by the vanity of human wishes. That's vanity in two senses: the proud but also, probably, the empty. Why can't the last Scotch Chancellor settle for being the fiscal rector who located Labour on the soundest ground it ever occupied?

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The African gene

George Monbiot



EVEN during the Irish famines in the middle of last century, anyone with eyes to see knew that starvation was not a purely technical matter. The potato crops might have failed, but there was no shortage of grain; instead of delivering it to the starving, however, tenant farmers were forced to surrender it to their landlords.

Famine arose, in other words, less from a failure of harvest than from a failure of distribution, which in turn emerged from a still greater failure: the absence of self-determination. Without control over their own lives, the Irish could neither grow the crops they wanted, nor ensure that they each received a fair share of the land's bounty. Only the landlords and their apologists chose to represent the carnage as the result of fungus and poor yields.

Today, this pattern persists. The victims of most modern-day famines are all too well aware that the main reasons for their distress are deficiencies of distribution and democracy, while the world's fat cats continue to insist that starvation emerges principally from failures of yield.

A fortnight ago, consultants acting for Monsanto, the biotechnology company whose recent merger will make it one of the largest corporations on earth, wrote to some of Africa's most prominent academics and politicians, inviting them to sign a stirring public statement called "Let the Harvest Begin". "Many of our needs have an ally in biotechnology and the promising advances it offers for our future," it declares. "With these advances, we prosper; without them, we cannot thrive... Slowing its acceptance is a luxury our hungry world cannot afford." The statement, with the names and titles of its signatories, would be published in major European newspapers in early June.

WHILE some of the recipients responded with outrage, others, inspired perhaps by the visionary language, signed up. Monsanto's name appears in such small print on the draft declaration as to be barely discernible; readers could be forgiven for imagining that the statement is the initiative of the signatories, rather than the company.

There's no question, of course, that the world will need more food, and there's also no question that more of it will need to be produced in

Africa. But Monsanto's suggestion that the continent's freedom from famine depends upon its technologies would be hilarious, were it not so sinister. For Monsanto's operations can now be numbered among the hungry continent's greatest threats.

The leading edge of Monsanto's new work is not the production of food, but the production of feed crops, in other words, grown not for humans but for animals. Last month, the company announced a joint venture with the gigantic multinational grain merchant Cargill, to produce and market the seeds of genetically engineered maize.

"The opportunity is just enormous," Monsanto's president announced. "We see the value that we can create as several billion dollars."

Feed production is a growing component of Third World agriculture, supplying the ever-increasing consumption of meat, eggs and dairy produce in the First World. It is also one of the engines of African famine, as land previously devoted to meeting local people's necessities has been expropriated to supply the rich world's luxuries.

Much of Africa's most fertile territory is ideal for growing the new, more profitable strains of maize fodder being developed by Cargill and Monsanto.

But this is the least of the ways in which Monsanto threatens Africa. Three months ago, America's Delta and Pine Land Company patented a remarkable technology. Its "Terminator" gene ensures that the plants which contain it produce only sterile seeds: farmers planting these crops, in other words, will be forced to buy new stock every year. The new technology, "terminator seeds" are, according to the

Monsanto threatens to become the hunger merchant of the third millennium

original patent holders, "Second and Third World" countries.

Four weeks ago, Monsanto bought the company, if it succeeds in inserting the Terminator into its seed varieties and maintains its relationship with Cargill, farmers could be presented with little choice but to buy its non-reproducing seed, as Cargill has already established near-monopolies in many parts of the developing world. It's a great development for Monsanto, but disastrous news for farmers, especially the one billion small farmers who produce most of the Third World's staple crops for local markets.

Monsanto, in other words, threatens to become the hunger merchant of the third millennium. Where it goes, famine will follow. And the poor saps who signed its advertisement will find themselves picking up the blame.

Europe is giving police powers beyond democratic control

Kafka lives in the EU

Richard Norton-Taylor

POLICE in five European countries last month arrested more than 80 suspected Islamic militants in a combined operation allegedly prompted by fears of attacks during the World Cup in France.

The suspects, mainly Algerians, were arrested in France, Germany, Italy, Belgium and Switzerland. Police in the Netherlands and Britain — where a further eight Algerians were arrested a few days earlier under the Prevention of Terrorism Act — are understood to have been involved in the operation.

The arrests were a timely reminder of a little-noticed but increasingly important feature of EU co-operation. While politicians argue about the euro-currency,

the profligate common agricultural policy and the merits of a single market, EU police and intelligence agencies are well on their way to constructing what Brussels calls an area of "freedom, security, and justice" — its euphemism for Fortress Europe.

It is being built by a Kafkaesque web of secretive, unaccountable committees, with titles such as K4, adopting programmes with names such as Odyssus, Falcone and Eurodac, with new institutions like Europol, under the cover of ostensibly benign initiatives called, "mutual assistance" or "joint action".

Policy decisions on asylum, immigration, stop and search powers, the installation of massive data bases, surveillance and telephone-tapping, are frequently adopted as what EU ministers quaintly call "A points" — decisions,

made by officials, passed on the nod. The Labour Government, like its Conservative predecessor, suggests that Britain is not really involved in all this. It is an island, after all, without the concerns of its EU partners. Recent tales about asylum-seekers and illegal immi-

grants hidden in trucks or deposited on the Eurostar by unscrupulous gangs of people-traffickers give the lie to that.

Anyway, ministers, notably Robin Cook, the foreign secretary, and Jack Straw, the home secretary,

have recently made it plain they believe that the fight against organised crime, drug-traffickers and terrorists are obvious candidates for combined action, not only within the EU but with the countries of central and eastern Europe, Russia and the US.

EU states recently agreed a barely-reported joint action against people participating "in a criminal organisation in the member states of the European Union". Crimes are defined extremely broadly — as offences carrying a sentence of four years or more.

The joint action catches anyone planning a crime "even where the offences concerned are not actually committed" and "even if that person does not take part in the actual execution of the activity".

EU justice and home affairs ministers also agreed to extend Eurodac — an EU computer data base for storing fingerprints of asylum applicants — to "illegal immigrants".

According to Statewatch, a London-based group which monitors civil liberties in Europe, they also agreed without debate the Falcone programme — training and co-operation between those involved in the fight against organised crime, including judges, public prosecutors, police, customs officers and what the EU euphemistically calls "civil servants".

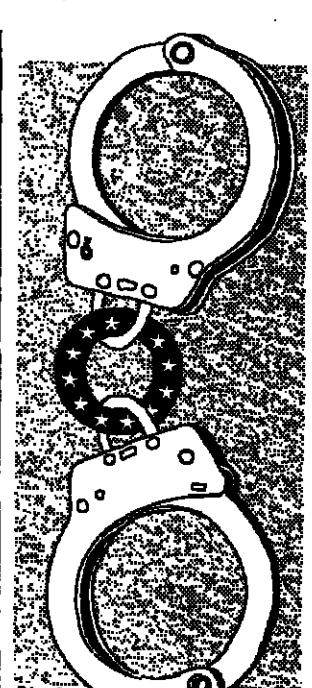
They agreed without debate to the EU Odysseus programme — designed to promote co-operation in the field of asylum, crossing of the EU's external borders, and "combating illegal immigration".

Europol, the EU's policing organisation originally set up to combat drugs, has been extended to include

"terrorism". EU ministers and officials can extend the list of "crimes" coming within Europol's grasp without telling national parliaments or the European Parliament.

Earlier this year, EU ministers agreed — also without debate — to allow Europol to store information from sources outside the EU. Personal data stored by Europol can include "use or more characteristics of his/her physical, mental, economic, cultural or social identity".

Police and intelligence agencies in the EU, and elsewhere, have a crucial role combating increasingly resourceful groups of criminals and terrorists. But their task should not be carried out at the expense of unacceptable threats to civil liberties and at the price of an EU increasingly deficient in democracy.



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African

Brown aims at surpluses

But orthodoxy has limits

EVEN his fiercest critics have been impressed by the determined way Gordon Brown has turned Labour into the party of strong finance whilst still managing to hang on to his left-of-centre political credentials. How long he will be able to walk this greasy tight-rope without splitting his trousers remains to be seen. His reaffirmed commitment this week to the "golden rule" under which current spending (on wages and supplies) must be fully paid for out of tax revenues leaving borrowing only for capital investment purposes is as sound as its Keynesian pedigree deserves. However, Mr Brown is going much further by planning current surpluses every year for the rest of the parliament so as to have a surplus over the whole economic cycle (ie to make up for the deficits marked up during the Conservatives' pre-election binge). It is one thing for Mr Brown to promise orthodoxy from now on — but to volunteer to expunge the prodigality of the previous administration as well, at a time when his supporters are begging for spending on schools and hospitals, smacks of making a virtue out of a vice.

If the Chancellor manages to fund extra spending from economies and reallocations within existing budgets — or from the surpluses he is building up — then well and good. But if he makes a fiscal fetish out of budget surpluses he will endanger the wide support he received at the election. Some of the omens are not good. A statement on the long-delayed fast link to the Channel

tunnel was made yesterday. But the decision to build in instalments as if it were a Lego set, with no guarantee that the vital links to inner London (and the rest of the country for whom a fast link to Europe would be an economic catalyst) will ever be built, is mindbogglingly short-term. If the deficit-ridden continent of Europe can build a highly efficient network of fast rail links, why can't a Britain in surplus build a single 60-mile link from its capital to the Europe in which it wants to play so strong a part? Elsewhere the Treasury is trying to offload as much capital spending as possible on to the Private Finance Initiative which is little more than a way of building necessary projects in a more expensive way just so they can be kept off the borrowing requirement. Of course, they are not kept off the PSBR, they merely appear as repayments to the private sector which extend over many years. For instance, the latest University College Hospital rebuilding project in London saves £180 million in capital cost, but the hospital trust will pay between £20m and £30m a year, which over 30 years could mean paying £900 million for a £160 million scheme.

Balancing the current budget is absolutely right in theory, but in practice it means that pay increases in the public sector will for the foreseeable future be kept a couple of percentage points a year behind the private sector, then it will not only be grossly unfair but counter-productive. It will be impossible to attract recruits of the right calibre into education (without which improved economic growth is impossible) nor into health (without which no one can create any wealth at all). The Government has made it more difficult to escape from the effects of its tenuous commitment to a budget surplus by its promise not to raise income taxes. To keep this pledge while

satisfying demands for wealth creating (public) projects, the Government may have to look for other revenue sources — like cutting tax reliefs, hypothecating taxes for specific ends, creating compulsory pension schemes outside the tax system, or even reviving old ideas like taxing land values. Somehow they must find a way to marry fiscal orthodoxy with the strong demand for services whose only crime is that they are located in the public sector.

Sanctions now

The Serbs must be stopped

WHAT IS happening now in Kosovo is horrific in human terms as well as dangerously unstable. But it has its own logic which needs to be understood. The conflict between the Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo, and the role played by Slobodan Milosevic in fomenting it, does not need explanation. The inner tension between moderate and militant wings of the Albanian movement is more complex. President Rugova, the diplomatic face of free Kosovo, may have found a low level of violence useful as a lever to gain international support for his own non-violent aims in the past. But Serb intransigence, and the West's failure to grasp the Kosovo issue seriously once the Bosnian war had been settled, shifted the balance. The armed Albanian movement (UCK) came out of the shadows in March when the Serbian forces moved against it, with customary brutality, in the Drenica region.

Confrontation now shifts to western Kosovo between Decani and Djakovica where the UCK has been building up strength. It is pointless to ask who started it: the two sides are already — as the more militant Prime

Minister Bujar Bukoshi puts it — "in the first stage of war".

Is there any point then in "urging negotiations" over Kosovo, as Western governments are still doing? The new violence flared up just two days after talks began in Pristina with international support. Negotiations should still be encouraged but as with other situations in the past (not least in Bosnia) talking and fighting now go hand in hand.

The second question for the outside world is how far to recognise the reality that this has now become a war for national liberation by the Kosovo Albanians. It is tempting to do so, but this would destroy the maintenance of a joint European initiative — that is, one including the Russians, who still have influence in Belgrade. To take sides irrevocably at present serves no visible diplomatic purpose.

Yet the Serbs cannot be allowed to carry out ethnic cleansing — whatever the provocation from the UCK — with impunity. The sanctions which were recently lifted should be reimposed. Nato must also move quickly to strengthen the international presence on the Macedonian border, and to put one in place on the Albanian border. There are no simple solutions. All the more reason why the remoteness of the terrain should not be an excuse for delay: nor should the reality that this is now a serious war.

Language code

Bilingualism is not what it seems

THE notion of children studying in two languages sounds wonderful. *La noción de que los niños estudien en dos idiomas suena maravillosa*. What better education could there be than one that is truly bilingual,

giving every child perfect fluency in two tongues. *Cuál educación puede ser mejor que una que sea verdaderamente bilingüe, dando a cada niño una perfecta facilidad en dos lenguas*. Admittedly, as you can see, the bilingual imparting of information can be time-consuming, cumbersome and a real pain in the backside. But the net benefit for the pupils who receive it surely outweighs the effort. Even so, the people of California have just chosen to deny their children this great opportunity — voting by a large majority to dismantle the system of bilingual education which has operated in that state's schools for 30 years. It sounds nuts: if children here were being taught in Spanish or French as well as English we'd all hail a great achievement. Why on earth would Californians now sweep it away?

The answer is that bilingual education in the US is not quite what the name suggests. Far from offering dual-language tuition — with teachers providing consecutive translation of every sentence — it's actually a PC euphemism for teaching children in a language other than English. In California, with its enormous Hispanic community, that has tended to be Spanish. Today's Hispanic leaders have decided that this policy, however well-intentioned, has consigned their children to a linguistic ghetto — preventing them from entering the mainstream of English-speaking American society. Most of them backed Proposition 227 which passed yesterday.

The move is probably correct: past generations of US immigrants were forced to study in English and they mastered it in the end. That's what kept the legendary melting pot in operation. But Americans should not abandon the true bilingual ideal. If they were to raise a nation of children fluent in two or more languages their global edge could only get sharper. Ole!

Letters to the Editor

Lottery and a little Latin

YOU quote Ofot as saying that "if the license is renewed tomorrow, then Camelot would not win the tender" (Camelot bosses win again, June 3). Camelot will be free to bid for the next licence running from 2001. But, because the size of the market for the National Lottery is now known, we expect bidding to be even more competitive. Bids for operators' retention will need to be lower and bids for contributions to good causes will need to be higher.

John Storer, Acting director-general, National Lottery, London.

THE reason England are unlikely to succeed in France has been made clear by the acres of newspaper devoted to looking back at a failed, day-footed icon of the past. The future, in the breath-taking speed of Michael Owen, was ignored. It's little wonder the English are fuming for never seeing the writing on the wall because their backs are up against it.

Mike Trotter, Lymington, Hampshire.

DOES it matter how we elect our MPs (Letters, June 3) if once elected, they are going to spend their time discussing a football team?

Norma Haemmerle, London.

FOR large swathes of the country, Saturday night is now trainless. My last Midland Mainline train out of St Pancras is 9pm. It is little use to me subsidising culture in London if I am debarred because I do not have a car. A late Saturday train from all the London termini would be much cheaper than a fast link to the tunnel (Taxpayer faces extra £300m bill for Channel link, June 3).

Dr Bernard Rattigan, Loughborough, Leics.

JEJUNE (Letters, June 3) delivers from the Latin jejunus, possibly via the French jeûne — fasting or empty (not the same as jeune, youth). Just as a digestive organ (jejunum) may be empty of nutritional matter, so may a mind be empty of intellectual matter.

Erle Wood, Worthing.

Please include a full postal address and phone number. Letters may be edited. The Country Diary is on page 10.

Off-key on education

I WONDER if Stephen Byers is aware of the "withheld" from schools is put (Heads get full control of budgets, May 30)? David Blunkett has real schools' music has been savaged by the "central services" bad, individual schools struggle to educate in an unstable academic and social imbalance. Middle-class opting-out is not an issue in other European countries, yet it must contribute severely to our "falling" inner-city schools. Sarah Mallins, London.

I AM a Cambridge graduate living near Parliament and struggling to educate my two primary-age sons in the state system. The media rarely addresses the root inner-city problem: the two-tier system, with the opting out of the middle class. Few of my acquaintances use the state system locally. They pay, home

education or move out. What they fail to appreciate is that their children must later live in the same society as those whom they shun.

Yes, there are some bad teachers. But my overwhelming experience is of committed, competent professionals struggling to educate in an unstable academic and social imbalance. Middle-class opting-out is not an issue in other European countries, yet it must contribute severely to our "falling" inner-city schools. Sarah Mallins, London.

THE decline in teacher training applications is no surprise. I work in computing, where skill shortages are met by rising pay. My son, a graduate a year ago with a good degree and has been accepted for a teacher training course. He has been offered a maximum loan (not a grant) which will just cover his rent, with no allowance for food or course material. Does the Government think it can build a world-class education system with this kind of response to market conditions?

David Moore, Chesterfield, Derby.

YOUR headline "Universities fear the worst as colleges look set to benefit from fees revenue" (June 2) came as no surprise to those of us who opposed the proposals in the

local community and more effective and sustainable use of multi-million pound regeneration budgets. Peter O'Kane, London Housing Unit.

YOUR report infers that the Government's Social Exclusion Unit is aware of the danger of using statistical sleight of hand further to marginalise the worst estates of our land. The use of the words "worst estates" contributes to social exclusion and we would suggest that the term "priority need estates" brings them from the margin to the centre of our attention. But by focusing on geographical areas or groups of individuals, we mask the more fundamental changes which are necessary if we are to create a genuinely inclusive society.

Laurel Green, Bishop of Bradford. John Austin, Bishop of Aston. (For the Urban Bishops Panel).

Teaching and Higher Education Bill. It was clear that the Government set out to "tax" students in higher education to spend elsewhere in the system. The Government was pressed in the Lords but offered no guarantee that the full value of funds raised from tuition fees would be wholly "additional" income to higher education. My disappointment was that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors took so much on trust.

Baroness Blatch, House of Lords.

YOU mistakenly suggest that student contributions will provide an early answer to higher education's funding problem (Analysis, May 26). The full benefits of a tuition fee will only be realised after the period covered by the comprehensive spending review. In any case, students' fees have a guarantee that their contributions will be invested in higher education. Universities support Blunkett's bid for the necessary resources for education. But it is crucial that universities win their share of funding. Without this they will be unable to deliver their side of his skills and access agenda and the UK's competitiveness will suffer.

Plana Warwick, Chief executive, Committee of Vice-Chancellors, London.

YOUR report on the Select Committee on Public Administration's inquiry into the "politicising" of the Government Information Service (Ingham's favours warning to Labour, June 3) quotes the claims of journalists that there is "continuity more than discontinuity" in New Labour's relationships with the Lobby. But New Labour's news management strategy has prompted three substantive "discontinuities" as the Government seeks to control information to a degree unprecedented in peacetime.

First, it has centralised communications under the control of Campbell and Mandelson and the newly created strategic communications unit; even ministers are not allowed to give interviews without agreeing the text in advance.

Second, journalists who publish stories "off message" are bullied and isolated from government news sources. Third, the appointment of 30 special advisers and the "departure" of nine of the 18 most senior heads of information in the GDS since May 1997 have prompted concerns that Labour's news management strategy may be undermining the traditional civil service claims to neutrality; hence the current investigation.

Bob Franklin, Sheffield.

BERNARD Ingham's comment about the government spin-doctoring have all the credibility of Gaza launching a new fitness video. Whilst Ingham is right that press officers should not show favouritism in the dissemination of rare news, spin-doctoring depends upon selective briefings, rewarding journalists for accurate coverage and offering exclusives. The mod-

care? They (rightly, I believe) told me that being in care would be even worse than living at home. The unpleasantness of "care" is well known among children, and taken into account when they make such decisions.

Surely this is what it is all about. If care were made too pleasant an alternative to dysfunctional family life, it might encourage more children to come forward, to ask to be taken out of their families. By making it an option of explicit last resort, the state continues to shore up the traditional family.

Name and address supplied.



Culture clash: Chris Smith's turn

GEORGE Walden continues his gratuitously offensive attack on creative Britain, whilst seeking a discussion (Letters, June 3). Such a discussion, however, would only have a purpose if it were entered into constructively. That means more than picking a few random sentences out of my book (which is all Mr Walden has done) and instead addressing its arguments.

These arguments are: that the arts and cultural activity are important of and for them-

selves; that they need to be disseminated as widely as possible to as many people as possible; and that they form a major and increasingly valuable part of our national economy.

A constructive approach to these issues might produce a rather more rational debate. Incidentally, I am not a singer/vocalist. Mr Walden should get his facts right too.

Chris Smith MP, Secretary of State for Culture.

Press gang

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Legal aid fees: defence and prosecution fight it out

SO the Law Lords are to examine the level of barristers' legal aid fees (On trial: a system that makes QCs rich, June 4). If they are to do the job properly they should examine both ends of the spectrum. For many young barristers and solicitors, the level of legal aid remuneration is so pitifully low that it is difficult to see how many of them survive. When expressed as an hourly rate there must be many barristers that are paid less than plumbers. The Lord Chancellor has criticised fat-cat lawyers. How come he receives more from the public purse than the Prime Minister?

Mr R Edwards, London.

IDENTIFIED as a QC milking the public purse with extravagant fees, Christopher Salton makes the aggrieved statement "it is very unfair to be criticised for asking for a sum where there is absolutely no guidance on how you should

submit your bill" (the bill was £33,000 for one defence).

What "guidance" does Mr Salton require to maintain the distinction between a public servant and a public disgrace? Does he need a senior official to remind him that such opportunistic acquisitiveness is spectacularly out of order in one supposedly dedicated to public order? If he needs further guidance, I would myself be prepared to perform a citizen's arrest on him for the crime of high court robbery. One might suggest that Christopher Salton should acquaint himself with the principles of natural justice that must inform any legal system — that it is not to become simply the most visible and ostentatious part of the superstructure of privilege.

Damian Grant, Manchester.

CRIMINAL legal aid fees — need more to be said? David Marcer, Gloucester.

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Udi Eichler

Between worlds of combat and love

Udi Eichler, the documentary television producer, lived in contrasting worlds, and enriched them all with his direct and inquiring mind and the gift of friendship. He packed several lifetimes in to his 56 years. When the Austrian teenager, Gerry to his friends, arrived in England on a visit to one of his several step-fathers in 1955, he had already decided which country to adopt. He fluently argued why he should be taken into local authority care, and was sent to the London County Council boarding school, Woolveston Hall. He then came to London to put himself through Regent Street Polytechnic while lodging with the radio producer Tony Cash, through whom he made his first contacts with the BBC World Service at Bush House.

Those were the first steps to a BBC general traineeship,

achieved ahead of, and against the competition of the Oxbridge worthies of the day. Udi, as he had now become, had in the meantime married Diana Davies at 20, with whom he had two daughters, Talia and Hannah, while still an impetuous student. Those of us who met him first in the mid-sixties, therefore, marvelled at how much he had done far earlier than most. We didn't know the half of it. Udi was the child of Europe's tragedy, the offspring of a relationship between Reimar Blinder — then in the German army — and Gertrude Lieb. Udi endured much, not just the hardship of infancy with a single parent in defeated and occupied Austria, but also 14 operations on a crippled foot. There followed a life with four stepfathers, and the intervals between. From one of them he took the name Eichler. From another, the

Englishman Charles Gustavus, he acquired that link to England and another world. Udi was a formative influence as a very young television producer flourishing at the BBC and Thames under the free spirit of Jeremy Isaacs. He was bold, direct in a sometimes disconcerting way in a profession not noted for full frontal candour, and ambidextrous not just between English and Austrian culture but also between the necessary generalisation of broadcasting and the direct personal contact he relished. He lived ideas. He found gifted communicators, from Brian Magee to Michael Ignatieff, who could put them across on the nearest he could get to a seminar of the air. Right across the spectrum, from Keith Joseph to Salman Rushdie, he found friends who fought for their own concept of freedom, and valued Udi's honesty of purpose.



When, years later at Brook (the television production company he founded with David Epstein in 1981), we needed to persuade Keith Joseph to say painful things about his own failure and the opportunity it had provided for Margaret Thatcher, the reply from that tortured soul

He took a perverse delight in the near-horizontal ratings for his discussion programme for the new Channel 4, with the audience perhaps in inverse ratio to the content

to Udi was instantaneous. "Udi, since it is you who ask..."

many series, the audience perhaps in inverse ratio to the content. He found larger audiences for his later programmes with Jonathan Miller on *Museums of Madness* and a series *Family Therapy* that mirrored his own lifelong interest. Those who knew him wanted him on screen too, arguing cajoling, probing. It was appropriate that his profile of Salman Rushdie, made at the moment when the writer's continuing plight most needed attention from a sluttish government and fair weather friends, should have allowed a glimpse of this staunchest of friends at Rushdie's side.

More and more Udi turned to the personal. He had lived for many years with his first wife in East London, in the Family by Choice community, founded by the psychoanalyst Catherine Ginsburg. His interest in psychotherapy outlasted that long period of

his life, and deepened. He took an MSc at Roehampton Institute while remaining in television, and began to build up a practice of patients. They, like we who were his colleagues at Brook, benefited immensely from his gregarious interest, his gift of perfect precision, of character and situation alike, and his skills in conflict resolution. His aversion to the Austria of his youth had taken many forms. We teased him that he wanted to be Jewish, as well as English, and towards the end he was perhaps looking back to a different Austria too, the intellectual life of Vienna at the beginning of this century. Certainly it was debate, warmth, an endless variety of old friends and reconciled antagonists, who were welcomed to the happy home he made in Hampstead with his second wife, the writer Judith Summers, and their young son Joshua.

It was there, with a new family and a burgeoning career, that the blow fell. He was diagnosed with cancer, operable but likely to persist. He had eight months to live with this malign prediction. He had everything to lose. But he was stoic, unperturbed in self-analysis, generous with time and advice. He had after all, been born to the kind of suffering few of us must endure. So his last months were a cascade of friendship. There was no long littleness to his kind of life. He lived his last journey cheerfully exhausted by the demands we all made on him, lying there, with his toes brightly painted by Joshua, in combat and love to the last.

Philip Whitehead and Anne Lapping

Udi Eichler, television producer and psychotherapist, born January 12, 1942; died June 3, 1998



A brilliant teacher with a waspish tongue... Rudi Shelly outside the Bristol Old Vic theatre school in 1986

Rudi Shelly

Master classes in the art of life

RUDI Shelly, senior acting tutor at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, who has died aged 90, was perhaps the most brilliant, if unorthodox, teacher of drama in this country. He hated demarcation lines, was intensely suspicious of university drama departments, and went his own way with a fecund imagination and waspish tongue, claiming to be an intellectual "and certainly not highbrow".

He was egocentric and relished attention and acclaim. He probably knew he was a better actor than half his students. The Austrian accent, which he never lost, could be unfurling theatrical effect when he had an audience. He was in turn infuriating, shocking, amusing and cussedly independent in spirit and method.

There are thousands of stories about him, many told by actors who chance upon each other in distant parts. All are relayed with affection. Dozens were exchanged at the party given for him four years ago at the Theatre Royal in Bristol. He thought it was going to be a small affair and nearly 600 people, among

them numerous famous names, turned up. Rudi was given a standing ovation and Anthony Hopkins made the main speech. In response, the dozen of drama teachers began: "I won't keep you long." He was still going half an hour later...

Born in East Prussia, he earned a doctorate in economics before going on to train at the Vienna Conservatory in dance, voice, acting and swordsmanship. In 1936 he emigrated to Palestine and in 1948 arrived at the Bristol Old Vic on a one-year student/director visa. Very quickly he was invited to teach at the newly-formed theatre school. And that was where he stayed.

His methods were often his own. "All this artsy-fartsy work, pumped full of symbolism, means little to the audience. To me, it's nothing but a masturbatory activity on the part of directors and designers. They get a kick out of it — those who've paid for a ticket, don't."

Shelly, for all his flamboyance and biting shafts, was a kind man. He had a natural pastoral side and was proud of the fact that he talked two

students out of suicide. He could be dismissive about some aspects of his craft: "too much bloody pseudo-artistic bullshit around", he once told me.

His students never forgot him. Daniel Day-Lewis flew over specially from New York for Rudi's recent 90th birthday. Greta Scacchi also looked in to see him. By then living in a Clifton nursing home, following several strokes, he talked animatedly to his numerous visitors about the only job he had known, gossip and shamelessly vulgar as ever. He was passing on acting tips only hours before his death.

Up to Christmas he was still actively teaching at the school; after that he continued to give master classes at the nursing home. There is to be a celebration of his life at the Theatre Royal, Bristol, on a Sunday in the autumn. It looks like another full house.

David Foot

Stephanie Cole adds: He was a small man with a dancer's physique, expressive hands adorned by a vast signet ring, a strong face with deep lines that suggested both sur-

prise and laughter, crowned with a shock of not entirely controlled hair, a much imitated accent, all adding up to one of the world's greatest teachers. He first came into my life when I was about 13 and my stepfather met him on a train.

On learning that Rudi taught at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, he said that I wanted to be an actress and did Rudi have any advice? "Yes," said Rudi. "Tell her to read as many plays as she can and learn to sew." This last was not what I wanted to hear but it did stand me in good stead in the early years.

For 40 years, Rudi was my friend, mentor, support and teacher, as he was to so many. Will any of us forget those morning exercises done to *The Skaters' Waltz* or the admonitions to "Squeeze your lemon." "Up with your bolero." and "Open your crutch."

His notes could be devastating but never destructive: after a performance of which I was particularly proud, his comment was "Darling, you looked like a pregnant nightingale."

Rudi began as a movement teacher but expanded to an

holistic approach. His knowledge of plays, music, dance, painting, sculpture, mythology and psychology was encyclopaedic and universal.

His home was an Aladdin's cave of treasures for the actor. I had the privilege of working as his assistant for a year and studying all his years of notes. One of his greatest complaints was that students came to train with insufficient reading habits and so little background knowledge of theatre and its origins. But his greatest disdain was reserved for those who lived in their heads.

"Oh God, another intellectual." To be taught by Rudi was not just to learn the craft of acting but the art of living. His master-classes were inspirational: towards the end of his 90 years he would arrive with the help of two sticks which would be cast aside, and like the great conductors as they mount the podium, he would be filled with youthful energy.

With a multitude of others I will miss him hugely.

Rudi Shelly, drama teacher, born May 9, 1908, died May 26, 1998

Sam Aaronovitch

After Cable Street, the battle goes on

SAM Aaronovitch, the communist militant turned academic with attitude, has died of cancer aged 78. A man of amazing energy and dynamism who took to climbing the Dolomites in the East End boy made good — eventually. Yet he never forgot where he came from and the values he stood for.

The second son of Lithuanian Jewish parents, who had fled to London as part of this century's first wave of ethnic cleansing, Sam Aaronovitch failed the eleven plus and left school at 14. Recovering from rheumatic fever for six months in a Surrey hospital gave him early experience of anti-Semitism. Accompanying his father on visits to tailors who beat down his prices for outwork and repairs gave him early insight into the realities of market economics. Combined with the rise of Mosley's fascists in the East End, the decision to join the Young Communist League flowed naturally.

Born in Stepney's Cable Street, Sam played his small part in the famous battle of Cable Street that stopped Mosley's fascists marching through the area in 1936. It was the start of three decades of organising, educating and agitating: in Rolls Royce factories in the Midlands and Scotland, in the St Pancras rent strike (1936) and at Ford's Plantations in Dagenham. There was an eight-year spell as the Communist Party's cultural organiser supporting the Unity Theatre, promoting Paul Robeson concerts and memorably — and for him later, embarrassingly — condemning the degeneracy of rock 'n' roll. For these efforts he can be spotted in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* and is cited in her autobiography, *Walking in the Shade*.

Yet Sam always had an independent edge that made Communist Party apparatuses uneasy. His talents were never fully appreciated so approach 50, he decided to "downshift" into academia.

In an era when mature students were a rare breed Balliol College, Oxford, had the foresight, in 1967, to recognise talent and ignore prejudice. Here was one of the most

widely-read, self-taught men of his generation — a genuine autodidact, of the type bred in that era in CP enclaves, in the East End, South Wales and Scottish coalfields. Politics and curiosity spurred him on. As a teenager Sam had borrowed a friend's ticket to the British Museum Reading Room to read about 18th-century German pietistic philosophy along with Goethe and Schiller in the original German. After the war, he wrote several books including *Economics for Trade Unionists* and *The Ruling Class* which became handbooks for a new generation of activists.

To Sam, doing a DPhil in

which bridged the world of academia and politics. Here, local government officials and councillors mixed with researchers and lecturers in a unit that challenged neo-liberal orthodoxy.

For Sam, there were always alternatives to be developed and fought for: a globalising economy could still be shaped and reformed by social intervention. LEPU encouraged strategic policy thinking by councils on economic policy. Sam argued for new employment policies for women, young people and the Bangladeshis who had replaced the Jews as the next wave of immigrants into Stepney and Whitechapel.

Despite ill health in late 1988, he brought together academics and practitioners from across Europe and America in a major conference on "The Future of Work". To the end, Sam fused the academic and the political together. He knew the left had to change, but he didn't mistake modernisation for moonshine when it came to capitalist economics. The beast had still to be tamed, if no longer slain.

One of life's more egocentric characters, Sam had a turbulent domestic life. Engaging to listen to, he was undoubtedly harder to live with. He had three wives — Bertha, Kirsten and Lavender — five children and for the last two decades had lived with Kath Halpeny. Immensely proud of all his children, he took particular delight when David became President of the National Union of Students in 1980 and found ironic amusement in the temporary notoriety that Owen achieved when he starred as Jon Lindsay, Deirdre Ratch's "love rival" in *Coronation Street*.

Here was a man always full of stories, usually beginning "Don't you remember when", with a lovely sense of humour and a hearty chuckle to go with it. He lived life to the full and filled his own with purpose. As the Yiddish saying goes, *Das war ein Mensch*.

Jon Bloomfield

Sam Aaronovitch, economist, born December 26, 1919; died May 30, 1998

Birthdays

Anthony Braxton, jazz musician, 63; Bob Champion, trainer and former jockey, 50; Sir Charles Cockerell, inventor of the hovercraft, 88; Andrea Jaeger, tennis player, 33; Elizabeth Jolley, writer, 76; Tony Pigott, cricketer, 40; Geoffrey Palmer, actor, 71; Lord Rayleigh, chairman, Lord Ray-

leigh's Farms, 39; Brian Rose, cricketer, 48; Kerry Shale, actor, 46; Sir John Sparrow, chairman, Horse Racing Betting Levy Board, 65; Tom Sutcliffe, opera critic, 55; Dan Topolski, writer, photographer and rowing coach, 53; Dennis Weaver, actor, 74; Prof John West, electrical engineer, 76; Sir

David Yardley, former chairman, Commission for Local Administration in England, 69; David Yip, actor, 47.

Death Notices

GARNETT, Jerry, peacefully on 29 May after a long illness, which he loved and will be sadly missed by his family. Donations to Macmillan Fund or Whitehaven to John Noddy, Funeral Services, 181 Ledbury Grove, London W10. Service to be held at 12.00 noon on 10 June at Kensal Green Cemetery, Harrow Road, London W10.

HOWARD, Ben (William), passed peacefully at home, aged 74. Much loved father, grandfather and friend. Former correspondent for *Greenpeace*. For funeral details, ring Helen on 01825 589 877.

SCOTT, Myranda, dear wife of George very peacefully on 1st June. Following private family arrangements there will be a Private Service for her life on Wednesday 10th June at 11.00am at St Mary's Church, Churchgate St, Old Harlow. It is hoped that we can all meet at Churchgate Manor Hotel after the service. No flowers please, but donations would be welcomed to The Arthritis Research Campaign, c/o St Mary's Church, Churchgate St, Old Harlow, Essex CM20 0DW.

WICKES, Richard Percy, born 19th September 1915, died 1st June 1998. At peace. Sadly, after a turbulent life, irreplaceable for Helen, and for so many others.

In Memoriam

DOYLE, Kate, died so tragically three years today, most precious and adored daughter of George and Sarah, who will be missed by all. Love is forever.

To place your remembrance telephone 0171 73 4567 or fax 0171 73 4128 between 9am and 5pm Mon-Fri.

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

IN AN ARTICLE on Page 7, G2, June 2, about the RAF Chinook helicopter which crashed on the Mull of Kintyre on June 2, 1994, we said, that John Reid (the armed forces minister) told the Commons defence committee that there had been just one Chinook accident "after" that crash. We should have said "before".

ON PAGE 7, G2, June 2, in a panel headed, On the razzle: four of the best, we said that Duncan Ferguson played for Glasgow Rangers reserves on his release after a short prison sentence in 1994. His first game was for Everton reserves.

ON PAGE 1, May 25, we analysed the results of a Guard-

ian/ICM poll testing support in Britain for the single European currency the euro. We said that in May this year 34 per cent voted to join the single currency, 48 per cent voted against and 17 per cent didn't know. We said the gap between the pro and anti-euro camps would be "narrowed" if the do-it-knows were excluded, giving figures of 58 per cent against and 42 per cent in favour of the euro. That would change the gap from 14 per cent to 16 per cent. The figures were correct. The use of "narrowed" was not.

A REPORT on Page 10 yesterday, headed, Rescue plan drawn up for 'lost' wildlife, wrongly referred to English

Heritage when it should have mentioned English Nature. Sorry.

IN A column on Page 14, June 1, we referred to the 1947 landslide Labour victory when we meant to say 1945.

IN A Bulletin item on The Enterprise Page, Page 21, June 2, we mistakenly referred to the Federation of Small Businesses when we meant to refer to the Forum of Private Business (01565 634467). Apologies.

IN PASS Notes, G2, Page 3, May 18, we mentioned the origin of *The Magic Roundabout* in a French television show called *Le Menage Enchanté*. That should have

been *Le Menage Enchanté* (the enchanted merry-go-round).

PASS Notes on Lucien Freud yesterday, Page 3, G2, concluded, "Note to subs: It's Lucien, not Lucien. The Reader's Editor is even scarier than he is." It's Readers', not Reader's.

It is the policy of the *Guardian* to correct errors as soon as possible. Please quote date and page number. Readers may contact the office of the Reader's Editor by telephoning 0171 239 9589 between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Surface mail to Readers' Editor, The Guardian, 119, Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER. Fax: 0171 239 9887. E-mail: reader@guardian.co.uk

A Country Diary

HIGHLANDS: *Highland Butterflies* has just been published as a provisional atlas for all the butterflies recorded between 1970-1996 in the former Highland Region of 10,000 square miles. In the early years there was comparatively little recording but then the Highland Biological Recording Group was formed in 1986, and the following year it started a co-ordinated survey of orange tip and speckled wood butterflies: part of their success was due to the fact that schools were involved. Then in 1990 the group appointed a voluntary records co-ordinator and the atlas is the culmination of the many people who sent in records. Some butterflies in

the Highlands have expanded their range, such as the orange tip and speckled wood, while others, such as the marsh fritillary, are a cause for concern as they are restricted to the extreme south-west of the area. Another localised butterfly is the northern brown argus, which may be limited by the localised distribution of its food plant, rock rose. However, this is not the case with the localised grayling as its food plants — fine-leaved species of grasses — are widespread. The front cover is apt as it has a colour photograph of the Scotch argus, which is now virtually limited to Scotland. Two pairs of drawings in the atlas attempt to enable observers

to tell the difference between the small pearl bordered and large bordered fritillaries and the small and large heath, as these can be confusing.

There are maps and information on 28 species and some text on a further six species that have only been seen once or twice. The nationally rare chequered skipper is included and there are three maps showing the spread of the speckled wood. The authors of the atlas are Jimmy Stewart, David Barbour and Stephen Moran and it can be obtained from the Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, Castle Wynd, Inverness, price £3.95 plus 50p postage and packing.

RAY COLLIER

love

It was there, with a new family and a burgeoning career, that the blow fell. He was diagnosed with cancer. He had eight months to live. He had everything to lose. But he was stoic, unswerving in self-analysis, generous with time and advice. He had, after all, been born to endure. So his last months were a cascade of demands we all made on him. He lived his last days cheerfully exhausted by the demands we all made on him. He lived his last days cheerfully exhausted by the demands we all made on him. He lived his last days cheerfully exhausted by the demands we all made on him.

Street, es on

which bridged the world of academia and politics. The local government officials and researchers and lawyers unit that challenged each other's authority.

For Sam, there were also alternatives to be developed and fought for a global economy would still be seen and influenced by social law.

Despite the health problems, he brought together across Europe and America a group of people who were determined to replace the old with the new. He was a man who was determined to replace the old with the new. He was a man who was determined to replace the old with the new.

One of the more significant moments in his life was when he was diagnosed with cancer. He was a man who was determined to replace the old with the new. He was a man who was determined to replace the old with the new.

David Yardley, former chairman of the Commission for the Environment, died on May 27, 1998.

Death Notices

In Memoriam

Executive Financial Editor: Ben Clissitt
Financial Editor: Alex Brummer
Telephone: 0171-239-9610
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Nazi victims sue banks

\$18bn claim in New York courts

Alex Brummer
Financial Editor

THE spectre of the Holocaust cast a new shadow over the European banking sector yesterday when a lawsuit was filed in New York courts by the heirs of victims of the Holocaust.

The move to recover assets the victims claim were plundered and laundered by Deutsche Bank and Dresdner banks could make it increasingly difficult for them to do business in New York until the matter is resolved.

The class-action suit against Deutsche Bank and Dresdner has been brought by Holocaust victims and their heirs who allege that jewellery, coins, tooth-fillings, spectacles and other property were stolen from them at concentration camps.

The suit could include 100,000 to 150,000 plaintiffs, Ed Fagan, the New York attorney who filed the lawsuit, told the Bloomberg news service.

The German banks are the latest European financial companies to face litigation in the US from survivors and families of Holocaust victims.

The Nazi gold issue is back on the public agenda in the US as a result of an inquiry by undersecretary of state Stuart Eizenstat, who has spearheaded the work on Nazi gold.

Notebook

A new line on financing rail



Alex Brummer

THE whole history of the Channel tunnel to London's St Pancras station has been one of high finance. Even with John Prescott's latest blueprint travellers will have to wait until 2007 - at best - to enjoy the kind of high speed travel passengers on the French side have enjoyed since the tunnel opened in 1994.

which, if Mr Prescott is to be believed, it intends to use aggressively to ensure public accountability.

All of these arrangements are to the good and suggest that Labour, with some sharp advice from the Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson, knows how to deal with the private sector. Had the previous government given some attention to issues of public accountability and excess profits during the big privatisations of the 1980s and 1990s, then the public might not have felt as if they were fleeced.

The Government has come up with some useful devices for future public/private partnerships which might also be beneficial in regulation of the utilities.

Russian lift

THERE appears to be a growing conviction on the financial markets that Russia is too important to be allowed to fail.

The private sector players are counting on the Group of Seven richest industrial countries (suddenly Moscow again looks out of place on the top table) stepping in with new short-term credits.

This would be in addition to the next tranche of the International Monetary Fund's \$9.2 billion, three-year programme and would be aimed at preventing a rouble devaluation. A drop in the rouble peg is seen as being disastrous in a country that only a couple of years ago was flirting with hyper-inflation, and might have Western investment bankers heading for the door.

The best indication that some confidence is returning came from the latest Treasury auction in Moscow at which the authorities raised some \$946 million - but only by means of offering yield worth 60 per cent.

This is plainly an unsustainable way of financing the central government's needs over anything but the very short term.

The markets appear to be looking towards the promised shake-up in the tax collection system, yielding more government revenue, and an informal meeting of G7 financial officials, scheduled in Paris for next week.

Suggestions that the G7 might be prepared to put together a short-term emergency loan of up to \$10 billion to see Russia over the crisis have done a great deal to stem the outflow of funds.

Moreover, overseas investors have been impressed with the willingness of the Russian authorities to use high interest rates to protect the rouble.

The G7 may well have to consider whether it is time to dust off some of its early 1990s agreements with Russia. Among the possibilities is activating the General Agreement to Borrow, the IMF's emergency funding facility, to create an exchange support fund for the rouble.

That might not produce the \$10 billion the markets are anticipating, but it would demonstrate western confidence in President Yeltsin without straining the IMF's internal resources any further.

The sport business

Jordan's just done it. The \$10bn man

Mark Tran in New York

HIS sport's first \$10 billion man. Michael Jordan, the basketball player, has not only built a vast personal fortune but has had a dramatic impact on his sport and sponsors.

Fortune estimates Jordan's impact on Nike at \$5.2 billion, half in sales and half in intangible effects on the company's image.

It is not only Nike that has benefited. Jordan has endorsed hundreds of products including shower curtains, first-aid kits, pencil sharpeners, cake decorations, sleeping bags and biscuits.

Economist Tyler Cowen, who has studied Jordan, said: "It helps sell their product and it makes Michael Jordan more famous."

In addition to boosting product sales, Jordan has increased TV ratings, gate receipts and sales of NBA goods since 1980, when he led the Chicago Bulls to the first of their five championships.

In a profile this week in New Yorker magazine, Jordan says of the reasons for his success: "It could easily be a matter of timing, where society was looking for something positive. It could easily be a sport that was gradually bursting out into global consciousness at a time when I was at the top. And then there's the connections that I've had with corporate America since I started with Coca-Cola and then went to Nike."

The cumulative economic impact over his 13-year career - on ticket sales in the National Basketball Association (NBA), sales of cologne, underwear and TV ratings - totals \$10 billion (\$8.1 billion), according to American magazine Fortune.

Sports endorsement has been around for ages but no one has combined sporting prowess and commerce into such a potent cocktail as fifth Jordan. One reason is that he came on the scene at a time when media moguls such as Rupert Murdoch turned to sport as a way of winning huge TV audiences, paving the way for sports celebrities to become powerful marketing tools.

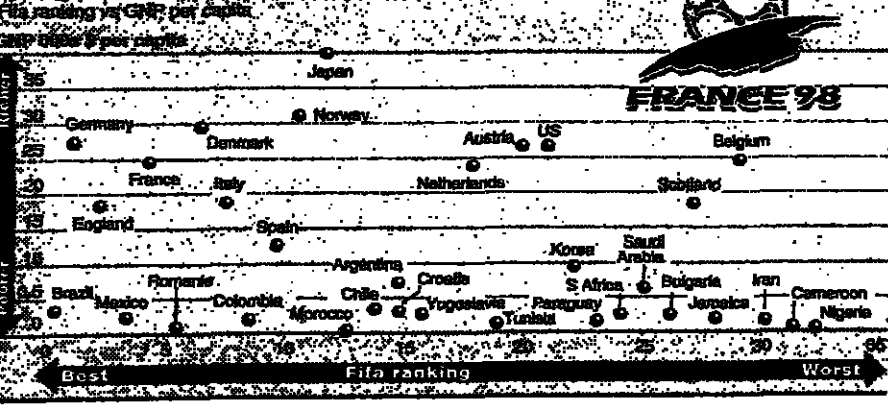
Jordan put Nike trainers on the map, starting with TV ads made by film director Spike Lee in the late 1980s.

Fortune calculates the impact on NBA attendance at \$165 million and TV revenues at \$365 million. Though no great shakes as an actor, Jordan can even deliver a starring opposite Bugs Bunny. His movie Space Jam, sharing the big screen with Warner Brothers' animated creatures, netted \$230 million at the box office and \$209 million in video sales.

Jordan and the Bulls last night began the NBA finals against Utah Jazz in their quest for a sixth championship title. These NBA finals could be 35-year-old Jordan's swansong, and his retirement could have a devastating impact on the companies that have relied on his enormous selling power.

Slam dunk... the American basketball star Michael Jordan, the man who put Nike trainers on the map, nets a fortune for himself and his sponsors PHOTOGRAPH: JONATHAN DANIEL

A game of two halves



Hoddle's hopes are hit by economic downturn

Mark Atkinson
Economics Correspondent

THE World Cup will not be on the pitch but within the banks, boardrooms and treasuries of the competing nations.

United fanatic, presents a graph which he believes shows that countries ranked highly by soccer's governing body, Fifa, tend also to have high per-capita income levels.

Although recent economic indicators offer encouragement to England fans, Mr O'Neill doubts whether this performance can be sustained.

With further interest rates rises expected to tame wage growth, he says the UK will suffer by comparison with the rest of Europe, which is on the verge of an economic upswing.

Based on the draw, our speculative best guess is that the semi-finals will consist of Brazil, France or Italy, the Netherlands and Yugoslavia," he says. He believes that it is also true, especially in Europe, that wealthy cities have the best players.

"In Italy, it is the two Milan clubs and Juventus of prosperous Turin that provide the top players for the national side. Many of the best overseas stars including those for Brazil and Argentina play in Northern Italy," says Mr O'Neill.

Windfall for NFC's 40,000 employee-shareholders

Julia Finch

SOME 40,000 employees of NFC are set to receive a windfall payment averaging £540 a head after the removals and logistics firm announced it was handing back £207 million in surplus cash to its shareholders.

NFC, formerly the National Freight Consortium, was once the UK's largest employee-owned firm; its workers banked thousands of pounds each when the company floated on the Stock Exchange in 1993.

It still has 40,000 employee-shareholders, who account for 7 per cent of the company, and they will share £21.5 million of the cash handout.

The spare cash is a result of NFC completely restructuring its business after slumping into the red three years ago. Jobs were axed, directors

paid off and businesses sold off - including brand names like BRS and Lynx - for £250 million.

NFC now concentrates almost totally on logistics and removals with its Pickfords offshoot, a less capital-intensive matter than its traditional haulage and truck leasing. So NFC is returning money to its shareholders.

The payback is a quarter of NFC's capital base; for tax reasons it is a cash-and-shares deal. Small shareholders will have no income-tax liability. The details of the handout emerged as NFC revealed half-year profits, constrained by the strength of the pound and the recent turmoil in the Far East, up 4 per cent at £52 million.

Profits in the US were up 26 per cent, while they edged up 4 per cent in the UK. In Europe NFC lost £1.8 million, 62 per cent less than last year.

Blunkett exports Labour's New Deal to Europe

Mark Atkinson
Economics Correspondent

EUROPEAN Union governments will today commit themselves to shifting the young unemployed off welfare and into work in a move hailed by Britain as evidence that it has managed to export New Deal thinking to the Continent.

member states gathered in Luxembourg for their final meeting under the UK's presidency, David Blunkett, the Education and Employment Secretary, said there had been a sea-change in thinking on jobs. Instead of waiting for protection through greater labour market regulation, governments now accept that they have to learn to live with globalisation by making workers more employable.

Mr Blunkett said he and the Chancellor Gordon Brown had been keen to ensure that the New Deal, under which the young unemployed get four options - subsidised or voluntary work, a job on an Environment Task Force or full-time education and training - were both exportable and adaptable to other countries. With every EU member now committed to tackling long-term youth unemployment through their own action plans - which are

due to be affirmed today - he was keen to ensure that they were "followed through" rather than simply agreed.

With the success of New Deal-style policies linked to achieving sustained economic growth, Mr Blunkett said he was encouraged by signs of a revival of demand on the Continent and diminished fears of recession in the UK.

"I think the forecasts of gloom and doom are premature," he said, adding that he assumed the Bank of England's monetary policy committee, which will announce its decision on interest rates at noon today, would vote for no change in policy.

Mr Blunkett's comments coincided with the release of the early results a survey by the Confederation of British Industry showing firms waking up to the need to make their staff more employable.

The survey shows that nearly two thirds of firms train employees beyond the needs of their current job, but continue to extend the use of temporary and contract workers.

TOURIST RATES - BANK SELLS

Australia 2.595	Germany 2.654	Malaysia 6.45	Singapore 2.67
Austria 19.85	Greece 483.50	Malta 0.82	South Africa 3.11
Belgium 38.21	Hong Kong 12.50	Netherlands 3.108	Spain 233.24
Canada 2.81	India 88.26	New Zealand 3.02	Sweden 12.44
Cyprus 0.83	Ireland 1.154	Norway 1.151	Switzerland 2.346
Denmark 10.81	Israel 5.97	Portugal 268.08	Turkey 405.840
Finland 6.88	Italy 2.003	Saudi Arabia 6.02	USA 1.598
France 6.44			

Supplied by Reuters (excluding rupee, shatel and mcollat)

Guarantee of £3.7bn opens way

Prescott saves Channel link

Lisa Buckingham
and Keith Harper

THE Government last night agreed to guarantee £3.7 billion of £5.8 billion refinancing of London and Continental Railways in what amounts to a backdoor subsidy to allow the first phase of the Channel Tunnel rail link to go ahead.

Work on the first part of the link, from Folkestone to Ebbsfleet in Kent, will commence before the end of the year. Railtrack will supervise its construction, and has made a commitment to buy the link on its completion in 2003.

It also has an option to construct the second phase of the link, from Ebbsfleet to central London, which it must exercise by 2003. Operation of Eurostar services has been

awarded to a consortium comprising British Airways, National Express, SNCF and the Belgian national train operator, SNCB.

The Treasury's decision to underwrite the enormously complex rescue package means about £1 billion can be scythed off costs, making the project viable. By being able to tell investors that it has the Government's backing, LCR's borrowing costs will be substantially cheaper.

There are still doubts about whether the remaining and more expensive section of the route will be completed. Railtrack's option on the route may be restricted by tighter controls that the regulator might impose over the next five years which might deter shareholders.

John Prescott, the deputy prime minister, announced yesterday's deal nearly five months after refusing LCR's

request for another £1.2 billion of taxpayers' money to help build the stretch from the Channel to Ebbsfleet.

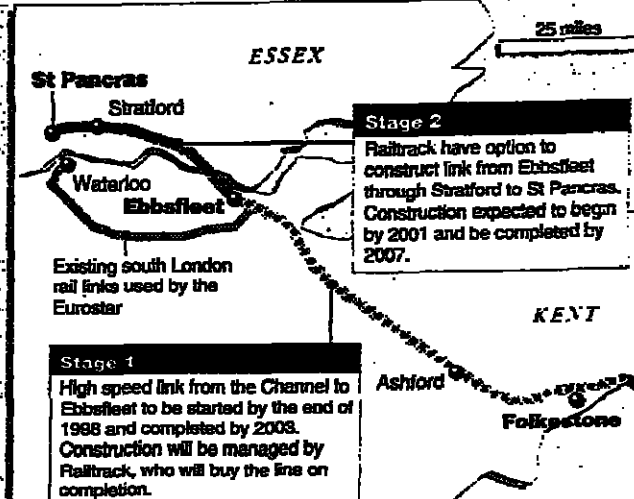
He told the Commons that the arrangement would involve only £140 million of extra Government money and he was confident that the rest of the line would be completed by 2007.

"This is an agreement snatched from the jaws of LCR's collapse," Mr Prescott added. "This is a deal which is good for integrated transport, good for the environment and good for the taxpayer. We will be joining the fast track to Europe."

The Government will take a "golden share" in the project and will get 35 per cent of LCR's pre-tax profits after 2020. Eurostar will revert to public ownership in 2008. Enthusiasts have argued that giving the go-ahead to the en-

Channel tunnel rail link

- Eurostar will be operated by a consortium comprising British Airways, National Express, SNCF and SNCB. Virgin was unsuccessful in the bid to operate the service.
- Rail link to be financed by issue of £5.8bn in bonds, guaranteed by the Government and a further £3.7bn of Government equity.
- Construction to take a 5 per cent stake in the Eurostar operating company.
- Eurostar to revert to public ownership by 2008.



tire project would save 50,000 jobs. Mr Prescott described the agreement as "a unique financial deal" and said it

was an "imaginative arrangement" in which the taxpayers will share the benefits as well as the risks. In addition to

the Government underwriting - which will not be reflected in the official Public Sector Borrowing Require-

ment figures - Railtrack has agreed to oversee construction of the first phase and then buy it on completion. The company, which unveiled profits of £388 million yesterday, up from £346 million, has also taken an option to build and buy the remainder of the link which will run through Essex and north London into St Pancras station.

Geoffrey Robinson, the paymaster general, said the £3.7 billion of fresh government exposure to the project would not count against the PSBR because the Office of National Statistics regarded the risk that the guarantee would be called as small.

An LCR spokesman said the company and its advisers at SBC Warburg and Deutsche Morgan Grenfell were "working on the expectation that we will raise the money - the Government has not written out a cheque."

But City investors failed to show interest in buying shares in LCR last year. One fund manager said last night that the £3.7 billion of bonds would "need a lot of selling".

LCR is, however, confident that it will raise £2 billion in loans and will persuade investors to buy the bonds - particularly as the agreement by Railtrack to buy the link gives a guaranteed exit.

The Government tried to encourage City confidence with forecasts of the passenger demand and likely income of Eurostar, a dramatic short-fall in whose earnings is the main factor which derailed LCR's first endeavour.

Mr Prescott said that although Eurostar was losing about £140 million a year at the moment, it was forecast to break even in 2004 when passenger traffic should have risen from 6 million to 9.5 million.

Customers put at the heart of green agenda

Bob Ayling, the chief executive of British Airways, argues that breaking down needless jealousies will improve transport flexibility, choice and standards

THE need for a truly integrated transport policy for Britain, and the rest of Europe, has never been more pressing.

Demand for transport of all kinds grows daily, in the air and on the ground, and the quantity and standard of service to meet that demand is rapidly improving.

Too often, however, it is unco-ordinated and fragmented with needless jealousies and rivalries between the different modes of transport. The result can be a frustrating lack of real choice for the most important element in the whole process - the customer.

reduced and service frequency increases, the rail option may also become more appealing to business travellers.

This is what I believe Heathrow should become - a travel hub for the world, offering various forms of transport.



'It seems to me that our becoming involved in the Eurostar bid makes not only good theoretical and moral sense, but sound, hard-nosed business sense too'

port onwards in Britain, into Europe and the rest of the world from one location.

The first steps along that road will be taken on June 23 when BAA opens its Fast Train service linking the airport with central London in 15 minutes every 15 minutes. This will set much higher standards of service from those which rail passengers have come to expect.

Detailed plans are being drawn up for two new stations to the north and the south of Heathrow to link in with the mainline train network and to provide a range of local rail services.

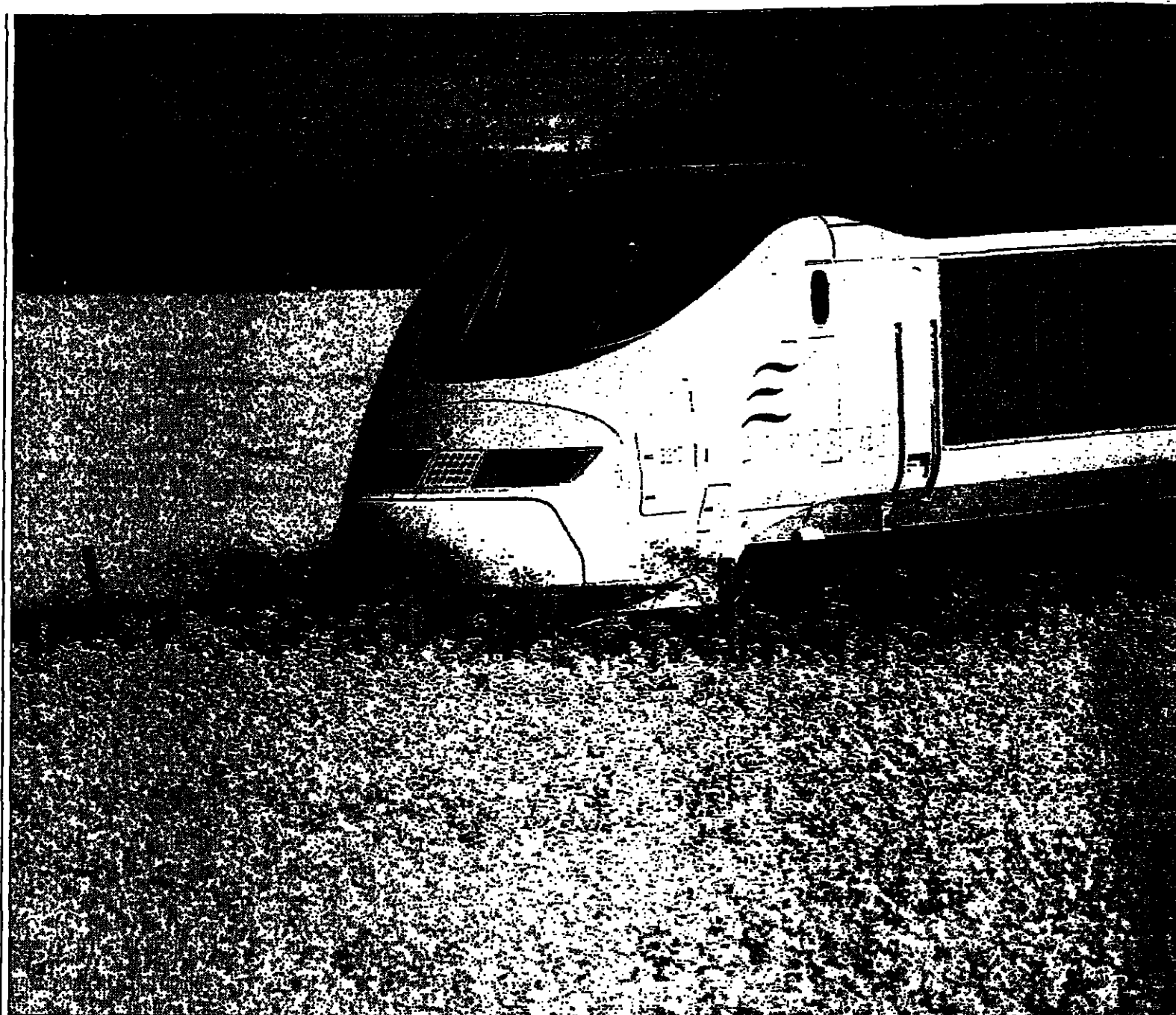
Airlines are enthusiastically supporting moves to develop local rail links to Heathrow, not least to enable the 50,000 airport-based staff to reach their place of employment by rail rather than having to drive on congested roads and take up scarce parking space at the airport.

British Airways will be working with our partners to ensure that Eurostar becomes commercially viable as soon as possible. For our part, we will be able to attract passengers from anywhere in the world on to Eurostar through our sales network and it is surely sensible that our particular expertise in marketing and selling an international product and service is included in the process.

Environmentalists support greater use of rail travel because it cuts roadside pollution by getting people out of their cars and on to public transport and reduces emissions of potentially damaging carbon dioxide and other harmful gases. It is hard to find anyone opposed to further development of rail travel.

So, not only is an integrated transport strategy good for our business and that of our consortium partners, it supports sensible UK and international transport and environmental policies. Until recently, however, it has largely been theory. I would like to see that theory put into practice.

It seems to me that our becoming involved in the Eurostar bid makes not only good theoretical and moral sense but sound, hard-nosed business sense too.



Eurostar moves on existing line in Kent; Stratford centre has to await renovation; and Ebbsfleet, where phase 1 will end

PHOTOGRAPH: GARY WEAVER

Agony and ecstasy of lives in limbo

Russell Nicol

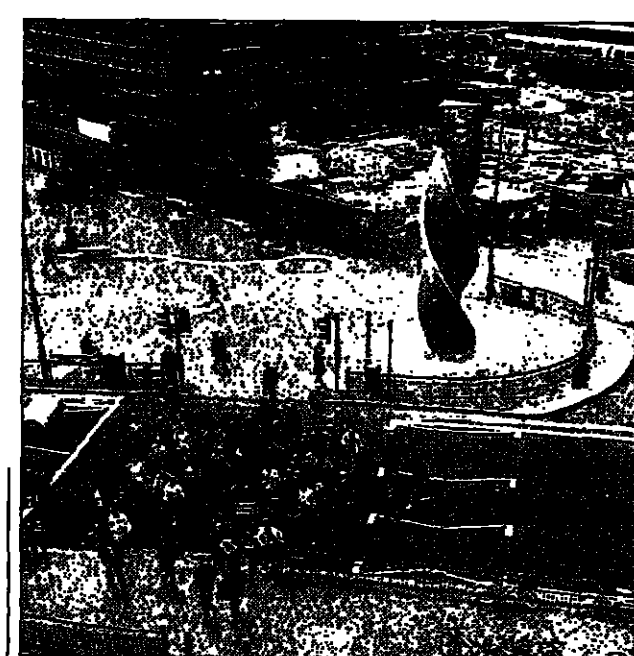
ABDOUL HAFIF looked down at the floor of his estate agency on Romford Road. "I think it will go right under where I'm sitting," he said, as if the vast drilling machines that will build the channel link were already eating their way towards him.

"Now that it has been delayed, it is like them deciding to kill you in 10 years. I live in limbo."

Mr Hafif does not like the link, which is now due to reach Stratford in 2007, because his office happens to be on the "blighted area", a 400m-wide swathe that passes through this struggling East London neighbourhood.

"If you're on top of it, you can't sell," he said. "I am a businessman and I have to make decisions but without knowing what is going to happen I can't make the choices." Away from the blighted strip, views change dramatically. With each announcement house prices shift. The area has 300 acres of brownfield sites waiting for the earth from the tunnel to cover its contaminated surfaces and the investment to bring in the builders.

In the five miles around its centre, which hangs heavy with the scent of de-



cline, there are 84,000 unemployed.

Kevin Kingston, director of the Thames Gateway partnership, hopes that the link will bring 30,000 jobs and 1,500 homes to Stratford alone. "It's about regeneration - not knocking 15 minutes off the travel time," he said.

Ty Davis, resident of the area for 25 years, now knows that another nine years stands between Strat-

You're Off!

You Could Be Off To The World Cup

Check your Personal Win Number on your second Yellow Ref's card, from last Saturday's "Weekend" magazine, against the numbers shown below to see if you've won a trip for two to the World Cup in France this summer.

Today's matches are: The winning numbers are:

Scotland if group winners	2150417
Scotland if group runners up	1734892

If Scotland do not progress past the first round, tickets will be for those teams who qualified in their place.

Semi-final 1 1757354

If England or Scotland have not progressed to the semi-finals, tickets will be for those teams who qualified in their place.

You need to call the Winning Hotline Number by 10pm on Friday June 5, otherwise the tickets will be put into our Free Prize Draw for unclaimed tickets, so if your number matches call now.

Winning Hotline Number
0870 123 4324

More chances to win!

If you've not won this time, see the Guardian tomorrow for another chance to win a pair of semi-final tickets.

Plus to enter our Free Prize Draw for unclaimed tickets (the Brazil v Scotland tickets were won this way - so you stand a good chance), just call the number below.

(Lines are open from May 22 until June 15. You only have to answer once.)

0870 123 4322

(calls will cost no more than 40 pence)



Rivals say passengers will pay dear for deal

Julia Finch reports on fury over airline's involvement in London-Paris rail service

BITISH Airways' rivals last night reacted furiously to the airline's involvement in the London-Paris rail link.

They accused BA of masterminding a cartel, said consumers would pay unjustified fares and demanded BA's role be investigated by competition watchdogs.

The UK's national flag carrier and its new Eurostar partner National Express are already dominant forces on the London-Paris route.

According to the Civil Aviation Authority, some 2.7 million people per year travel by air from Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted to Paris. The London-Paris air route is the biggest city-to-city route within the EU and BA has 39 per cent of the air travel market with 19 flights a day.

National Express, meanwhile, through its Eurolines operation, is the leading road

carrier between the two cities. Last night rivals attacked BA's involvement. Stelios Hajiloannou, chairman of low-cost air carrier Easyjet said BA's role was "like putting King Harold in charge of the kingmaker". He urged competition authorities to halt "this latest move against the consumer".

A spokesman for Virgin, which BA defeated in the battle to run Eurostar, said the deal John Prescott had put together was "admirable" but said there were "serious competition issues" over BA's involvement.

"British Airways and its partner National Express will now dominate 90 per cent of all the public transport between Paris and London. National Express control the coaches, BA dominates the air routes and together they now both control the rail service. It will be in their interests to

keep fares as astronomically high on the trains as they do on their planes. It is a cartel of monumental proportions, a charade and a disgrace."

Since Eurostar services started in 1994, the direct Waterloo-Gare du Nord link has stolen hundreds of thousands of air passengers. Some one-in-five capital-to-capital trips are now taken on the 180 mph train.

Even discounting the arrival of Eurostar, British Airways still has a dominant position on the London-Paris route, and claims 29 per cent of the combined air and rail market.

Eurostar, which BA will jointly operate with National Express and French rail group SNCF, speaks for a further 26 per cent. BA and Eurostar combined have 55 per cent of the market.

Last night BA insisted the airline did not expect any competition issues to arise because it was taking only a 10 per cent stake in the rail link and would have little influence.

سكنا من الاجل

Link

But City investors failed to show interest in buying shares in LCR last year, fund manager said last week. The £3.7 billion of the LCR is, however, a "guaranteed" asset, as the agreement to buy the bonds was a "guaranteed" asset.

The Government tried to encourage City investors to buy the bonds, but the demand was not there. A dramatic fall in the value of the LCR's first dividend was a major factor which deterred investors.

Mr Prescott said that the Government was "not working" on the LCR's first dividend, but the Government was "not working" on the LCR's first dividend.

Tennis

Arazi fails to cash in on his gifts

Stephen Barley in Paris

HICHAM ARAZI is one of the most gifted players in men's tennis. Alas, he is also one of the most frustrating. In yesterday's wonderfully absorbing quarter-final against France's Cedric Pioline, the 34-year-old Moroccan simply and starkly blew it.

The Frenchman, who was virtually out on his feet in the final set, won 3-6, 6-2, 7-6, 4-6, 6-3 and tomorrow plays Spain's Alex Corretja for a place in Sunday's final. It will be a minor miracle if he has the energy to get to the starting line against Corretja, who in the previous match on the centre court polished off Belgium's Filip Dewulf, a semi-finalist here last year, in straight sets.

The 14th-seeded Spaniard had a marathon fourth-round match against Hernan Gueses — over 5½ hours — but matters have gone relatively smoothly for him since. By comparison Pioline, aged 28, has now played two five-set matches in succession, yesterday lasting three hours and 42 minutes.

The Frenchman was the runner-up to Pete Sampras at Wimbledon last year and lost to the American in the 1993 US Open final but success at Roland Garros eluded him, his best run coming two years ago when he lost to Germany's Michael Stich in the quarter-final.

Arazi is capable of the most sublime tennis and there were moments during the first set when Pioline could only stare disbelievingly as shots blazed



Losing the toss... Richman Arazi serves during his five-set defeat by France's Cedric Pioline. PHOTOGRAPH BY LONEL GRONDEAU

Racing

Fallon squares up for Oaks revenge on Midnight Line

KIERN FALLON, successful on Henry Cecil's Eaton Square at Goodwood yesterday, is confident that his Oaks mount Midnight Line can reverse the form at Epsom tomorrow with her Musidora Stakes conqueror Bahr.

"Midnight Line has done really well since York and the Oaks will be a different race," said Fallon. "We had to make our own running in the Musidora and that didn't suit my filly. This time we've got a pacemaker and we're 21b better off with Bahr for a neck."

Fallon was impressed by Eaton Square, who ran out an emphatic favourite, the winner from Deep Dive with previous winner Soft Touch a distance back.

Grant Pritchard-Gordon, representing the winning owner Khalid Abdullah, commented: "That was the first time Kieren has sat on Eaton Square and he was very taken with him. He's not in at Royal Ascot but the Churchill Stakes on the Saturday is a possibility."

Fallon indicated that soft ground would not come amiss for his Derby mount Sadian, but said that if he could ride any other horse in the race it would be the Michael Stoute-trained Greek Dance.

The Stoute stable certainly seems to be peaking at the right time, as evidenced by a Goodwood double with Lonesome Dude and Double Classic.

John Reid rode them both but gave his backers plenty of cause for heart-flutter. Reid looked the wrong way on the cantering Lonesome Dude in the NAC Reinsurance Stakes and failed to

Haydock Jackpot card with form guide

ROW	COX	TOP FORM
2.30	Bullfinch	Three Angels
2.40	Spanish Fly	Spanish Fly (esp)
3.30	Double Double (esp)	Double Double (esp)
4.30	Double Double (esp)	Double Double (esp)
4.40	Double Double (esp)	Double Double (esp)

ROW	COX	TOP FORM
2.10	Pipe Music	Brave Noble
2.40	Spanish Fly	Spanish Fly (esp)
3.30	Double Double (esp)	Double Double (esp)
4.30	Double Double (esp)	Double Double (esp)
4.40	Double Double (esp)	Double Double (esp)

Yarmouth

ROW	COX	TOP FORM
2.10	Pipe Music	Brave Noble
2.40	Spanish Fly	Spanish Fly (esp)
3.30	Double Double (esp)	Double Double (esp)
4.30	Double Double (esp)	Double Double (esp)
4.40	Double Double (esp)	Double Double (esp)

Perth (N.H.) card

ROW	COX	TOP FORM
2.30	Bullfinch	Three Angels
2.40	Spanish Fly	Spanish Fly (esp)
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4.40	Double Double (esp)	Double Double (esp)

Be Off To The World Cup

Win Number on your second ticket Saturday's "Weekend" magazine, see below to see if you've won the World Cup on France this summer.

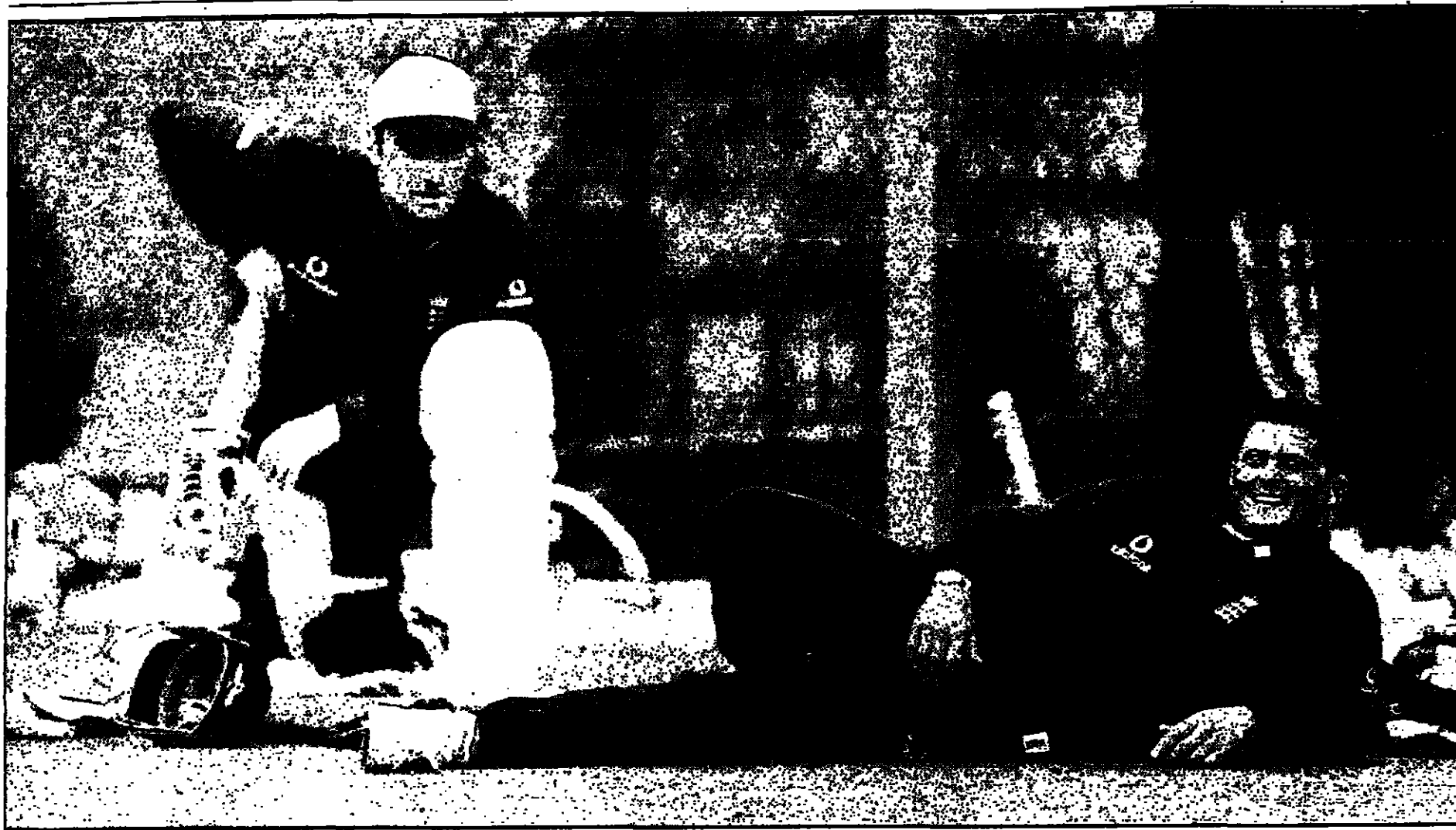
The winning number is **2150417**

1734892

1757354

123 4324

SportsGuardian



Back of the net... Graham Thorpe, England's Player of the Year, and Darren Gough, fit again after a fallow winter, draw breath at Edgbaston yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: CLIVE MASON

Stewart lays down the law

Mike Selvey on the new England captain's call for 'togetherness' in today's first Test

EARLY June would not be the same without the sound of a cuckoo suggesting that the latest Test series represents a brave new world, new dawn or whatever. Yet the last time England won a series of five Tests or more was in Australia 11 years ago, and they have not done so at home since the Australians were beaten in 1985.

But this time there really is cause for optimism as England go into today's first Test against South Africa, and

Alec Stewart, the latest captain and unquestionably the most spick and span since Colin Cowdrey turned up in his Jag already changed, has taken no time in reminding his team of the fact.

"I have spoken to all the players in pairs," he said after practice yesterday. "I told them precisely what I expect from England cricketers. I reminded them that it is a great honour to play for your country, and that while individual performances are the basis of team performance,

and it is vital to get your own game in order, they must always be mindful of others. "The team, always, is the thing, and we are working hard at creating a spirit of togetherness. I would like the dressing-room to be a very open place where people can express themselves."

Stewart may just be a lucky fellow, because by chance — or by astute selection and strategic development — he will be taking a team on to the field that for the first time in ages has "class" written

through it like a stick of Edgbaston rock.

South Africa's massive self-belief, like that of the Australians, can go a long way to compensating for shortfalls. But Stewart could have drawn comfort last night by asking himself whom, from the opposition squad, he might like to draft into his own side. Gary Kirsten, a partner Mike Atherton probably, although Stewart said that Mark Butcher was playing better than at any time he had known him; Shaun Pol-

lock to replace Mark Ealham; and Allan Donald, although whom would he replace of Darren Gough, Angus Fraser and Dominic Cork — almost certain to play instead of Dean Headley — if they are all on top form?

The strength of the latest side lies in the strongest middle order England has possessed in more than a decade, and an incisive seam attack to match. Stewart confirmed that although nothing is set in stone for the series, he will resist the temptation to open and will go in at four, leaving Nasser Hussain at three, the position in which he scored his maiden Test century against India on this ground two years ago and which he ought to have occupied last winter.

The captain also had a word of encouragement for Mark Ramprakash, coming off a roll of three centuries in four innings. "He is the most talented cricketer in England," said Stewart. "In West Indies he came of age, he needs to translate that into consistency but I believe he feels very much at home now."

The backbone of the South Africa team is resilience, strength of character, depth rather than quality of batting, and of course the Donald-Pollock partnership. From their time spent with Warwickshire both opening bowlers,

like the coach Bob Woolmer, probably know Edgbaston better than any ground in South Africa. Neither is likely to require the acclimatisation needed by Glenn McGrath in the opening Test last summer, when he bowled too short here and England romped home.

With Jonty Rhodes, a seam, a pace bowler, potentially devastating in the middle order, and a place, Brian McMillan, another Warwickshire old boy, could oust Klusener, leaving Paul Adams the only spinner for a pitch which was under covers yesterday but which, according to Stewart, was evenly grassed if not completely firm underneath. Whoever wins the toss will probably bowl first.

Stewart is happy with the triple role of skipper, stumper and top-order batsman, though aware of the pressure it imposes. "Of course I think I can do it," he said. "It's a challenge but I like challenges."

Stewart is unlikely to be aware of the fact but, when it comes to leading and keeping, history is on his side. The only other Englishman to do both was Le-ol Ronald Stanyforth, who took the team to South Africa in 1927-28, donned the gauntlets for the first four Tests and took the series 2-1. Stewart would settle for that.

'New' Derby still dances to old dream



Laura Thompson

YOU will no doubt be happy to know that last year the Epsom Derby — whose 1998 running takes place on Saturday — "turned a corner". It staged a "revival". For some years previously it had been "in decline". But in 1997 it showed that it was returning to its "glory days".

Does any of this mean anything at all? Quite possibly not, which is why it reads like a script for delivery by Tony Blair at the Derby lunch. And yet a belief in the Derby's decline and revival has taken a firm hold. Having started out as mere fashionable opinion it has become, as fashionable opinions will, an unquestionable truth.

Of course if you see Derby Day through a semi-mythical Johnsonian haze, in which the whole of London empties itself on to Epsom Downs and the Pearly King leads Lady Rosebery in the Lambeth Walk, then you would have been doomed in recent years to disappointment. Dickens tells you that "on Derby Day, a population rolls and surges and scrambles through the place that may be counted in millions". Then you get to the course and what do you find? Room not just to swing a cat but a whole jockey.

Even in 1851 Dickens was exaggerating somewhat. Nevertheless it is true that at least a quarter of a million people used to congregate in the stands and on the Hill. For some years now, however, there have been fewer than 100,000.

My father tells us that as recently as 1955 the roads into Epsom were so impossibly crowded that three hours before the race his party got out of the car and walked the last miles to the course, the poor soul left at the wheel didn't make it in time. And yet I, who have been driving to the Derby since 1991, have always found it slightly easier to get into than Ladbroke Grove, Sainsbury's on a Saturday morning.

But does any of this constitute a "decline"? Or does it in fact tell us about the world beyond the Derby, which has filled itself with rival attractions and especially rival sports? Sports that, unlike flat

racing, are easily susceptible to hype? Sports that are less remote, less rarefied, less obviously the preserve of the rich?

It is perhaps for this reason that the Epsom management, Racecourse Holdings Trust, has decided that in order to market Derby Day it must return to the merry world of Ben Jonson. Since 1995 it has, of course, staged the event on Saturday rather than Wednesday, the idea being to make it a day out for everyone rather than just for racegoers skiving off work.

And its 1998 slogan of "the greatest picnic" conjures images that are pure Bartholomew Fair: of a party on the Hill to which everyone is invited, of champagne and jellied eels, of hats thrown joyously into the air for the Derby winner. Mythical these images may be but they are still a damn sight more accessible than the Maktoum brothers.

In terms of attendance figures they are working their magic. Hence the talk of a "revival" in the Derby's fortunes. In 1995 the crowd was a disastrous \$4,585, by 1997, the year that Derby Day "turned the corner", it had risen to 72,850.

Having been there on both occasions I have no doubt that the atmosphere in 1997 felt kindlier, more relaxed, as though the tribulations caused by the change to Saturday — grimly evident at the 1995 meeting — had been resolved. Whether this vindicates the change as having been necessary in the first place I cannot say.

ALL I know is this: that in 1995 the Derby was won by a great horse in Lammtarra, subsequent winner of the King George and the Arc, and in 1997 by a good one, Benny the Dip, who never won again. The latter victory, by as brave an animal as I have seen, touched me deeply. But the Derby is and always will be about horses like Lammtarra, who take possession of the straight at Epsom as if they were born to do so. When one thinks of him flying through his other world, talk of decline and revival become meaningless.

Those for whom Derby Day is the greatest picnic are there for the fun, and good luck to them. They may care little as to whether, among the intriguing 1998 field, there is an other like Lammtarra, or Mill Reef, or Nijinsky, or Sea Bird. But whether they know it or not, it is the possibility that there might be which puts the atmosphere into Derby Day. Nothing else, in the end.

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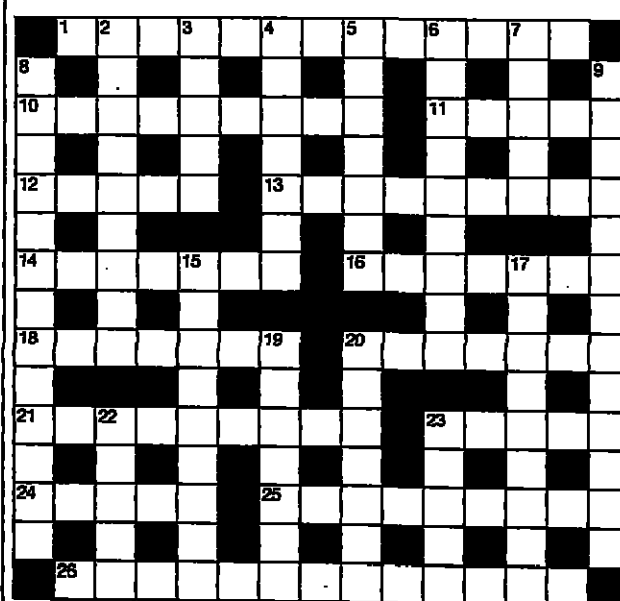
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About 50 singles were on board out of 650 women, but a misplaced chat-up line was taken as an insult. I tried to convince one woman, a therapist from Wisconsin, to go to a romantic spot one evening. She was deeply offended by the suggestion. "I'm not that kind of girl," she said with disgust. The perils of lesbian cruising

G2 page 5

Guardian Crossword No 21,292

Set by Janus

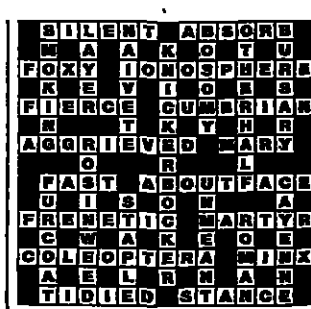


Across

- Airmail service with lofty connections? (7,6)
- French bonds seen as gains perhaps way back? (6)
- One wise man's likeness? (5)
- Disturb leading group? (5)
- Sign rain may fall on bookkeeper? (9)
- The most niggardly are in residence? (7)
- Binge broadcast by Radio Times librettist? (7)
- Came together to work on drug? (7)
- Fades away outside? (4,3)
- Instruments that may be influential at court? (6)
- Prepare for success as a stableboy? (5)
- Gave perhaps one point to strict dieter? (5)

Down

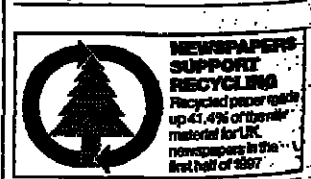
- Small party with fair share of balance? (5)
- Author, headmaster, politician and French model? (6,7)
- Helper on a ship is so French? (6)
- Ceremony reported as correct? (5)
- Ornament Lawrence returned to Oriental evangelist? (7)
- Mail carrier after uplifting talk? (7)
- Is a grille regarded as a work of art? (5)
- Took a pill for its animal content? (5)
- Play with musicologist under tree? (6,5)
- Check announcement on restoration to office? (13)
- Badly written note about



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21,291

spare parts in auxiliary language? (8)
 17 It's cool, for example, to be an environmental worker? (8)
 19 Irritated as novice wanted to go out? (7)
 20 Incapacitate Les Diablos? (7)
 22 Soldier climbing into vehicle for a smoke? (5)
 23 Corn-kid gets one in? (5)
 Solution tomorrow

22 Stuck? Then call our solutions line on 0800 338 238. Calls cost 50p per minute at all times. Service supplied by RTS



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